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"A NAUTICAL EXPEDITION."

THE WORST BOY IN TOWN

BY

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TO VERY BAD BOYS,

AND TO THE FINE OLD FELLOWS

WHO ONCE WERE CALLED VERY BAD BOYS,

THIS BOOK IS SYMPATHETICALLY DEDICATED

BY THE AUTHOR.

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CHAPTER I.

A NAUTICAL EXPEDITION.

"YOU'RE the worst boy in town!"

The speaker was Farmer Parkins, and the person addressed was Jack Wittingham, only son of the most successful physician in Doveton. Farmer Parkins had driven to town quite early in the morning to make some necessary purchases, and he had been followed by his faithful yellow dog, Sam, who had been improving the opportunity to make some personal calls and tours of observation. One of these last named recreations carried him near the back door of a butcher shop to which Jack had gone to deliver an order for his mother. Adjacent to the butcher's place of business was the shop of the village tinman, and behind this were strewn sundry kitchen utensils which had proved to be too badly damaged to be mended. Jack had noticed the dog when that animal first put in his appearance in search of a scrap of meat or bone, and had there-

after observed his motions with that peculiar interest which dogs seem always to inspire in boys. Then he happened to see a very dilapidated tea-kettle behind the tin-shop, and when dogs and tea-kettles become closely associated in the mind of a boy, even if the boy himself be of excellent birth and breeding, and quite tender-hearted beside, the juvenile traditions of many generations have generally the effect of causing the dog and the kettle to enter into an entangling alliance which the animal regards with accumulative aversion, and about which the tea-kettle, whose expressions are ordinarily so cheery, indulges in much unrythmical noise. Into such a combination were Farmer Parkins' yellow dog Sam and an old kettle forced very soon after Jack first beheld them both, and as yellow Sam hurried down street in an honest attempt to rid himself of his superfluous tin-ware, and as Jack followed him to note the results, with a view to the more accurate affixing of tin kettles to the tails of the dogs of the future, yellow Sam dropped exhausted in front of his master's horses, and the dog's master came out of a store near by, just as Jack, with a fragment of barrel-hoop, was trying to stimulate the animal to renewed exertion. It was then that the farmer remarked, with admirable vigor,

"You're the worst boy in town!"

Jack had heard this very expression so many times before that he was half inclined to believe it true, yet how it could be a fact was a something that bothered him greatly. He laughed when Farmer Parkins said it, and he replied also, by several facial contortions, which were as irritating as they were hideous; he stuck his hands into his pockets, and bravely tried an ingratiating smile or two upon such passers by as had overheard the farmer's remark, but as soon as he had reached an alley down which to disappear, Jack suddenly became a very chop-fallen, unhappy looking boy, and he murmured to himself,

"That's what everyone says. I don't see why. I don't swear, like Jimmy Myers, nor steal, like Frank Balder, I don't tell lies—except when I have to, and I go to Sunday-school every Sunday, while there are lots of boys in town who spend the whole of that day in fishing. I didn't mean to hurt old Parkin's yellow dog; I only wanted to see what he'd do. And just didn't he travel?—oh, oh! But I don't see why I'm the worst boy in town. I declare. If it isn't just the morning to go fishing—warm, cloudy, worms easy to get. I wish 't was

Saturday, so there wouldn't be any school, and I wish school teachers knew what fun it is to go fishing; then they'd be easier on a fellow who played hookey, and they'd ask him where he caught them, and how many, and how big they were, instead of picking up their everlasting switches and making themselves disagreeable. Perch would bite splendidly to-day, and there are people in this town who'd be glad to have a good mess of perch. I declare! I've just the idea; school or no school, whipping or no whipping, it ought to be done. I'll go right away and see if Matt can't go with me."

Jack moved rapidly through streets which crossed the main thoroughfare of the town; then he approached a wood-pile where a boy of about his own age was at work; before this boy's eyes Jack dangled two new fish-lines and some hooks, and exclaimed—

"Come along, Matt!"

"I can't," said Matt, gazing hungrily at the new fishing tackle, "the governor wouldn't like it at all."

"Oh, never mind the governor," said Jack, "I'll explain things to him when we get back."

Matt seemed to be in some doubt as to whether

the influence of his tempter with the governor amounted to much, for the functionary alluded to was master Matt Bolton's own father, a gentleman who held quite firmly to the general opinion about Jack. Besides, Matt was vigorously attacking the family woodpile, his honest heart alive with a sense of the need there was for him to do all in his power to relieve his overworked father, and alive, too, with the conviction that he would have to work industriously if he would chop and split a day's supply before school-time. Besides, a fishing excursion implied truancy, which, in turn, implied the certainty of a whipping in school and the probability of punishment at home.

"Father would be very angry," said Matt, as he sighingly withdrew his eyes from the new fishing tackle, "and he has already enough to bother him, without having things made worse by me."

"But Matt, he won't feel bad when he knows what you did with the fish. We'll give them to widow Batty. (This resolution of Jack's was newer even than his tackle, for he had formed it while he talked). "She's been sick, you know, and I heard your father say the other day that she must have a hard enough time, at best, to feed that large family of her's."

"But suppose we don't catch any?" suggested Matt.

"Then you can tell him what we meant to have done if we had caught some. Besides, we can't help catching a lot at such a splendid fish-hole as the mill dam. I think it's awful that a whole family should go hungry just because it hasn't got any father. Didn't your governor ever read you out of the Bible of visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction?—mine has."

Boys are no more likely than adults to resist Satan when he appears as an angel of light, so Matt speedily agreed to go as soon as he had prepared a day's supply of firewood.

"Got another axe, and I'll help you," said Jack, and within five minutes those two boys were making chips fly at a rate which would have been the wonder of a hired wood-chopper, while Matt's mother, who happened to glance through a window wondered why Jack's father could accuse that boy of laziness. Then both boys carried the wood to the kitchen door, unearthed some worms between sundry logs at the wood-pile, and disappeared as stealthily as if in their benevolent project they were animated by the scriptural injunction, to not

let the left hand know what the right hand was doing.

Reaching the brow of a little hill upon which the village was situated, Jack exclaimed—

"I vow, if the river has'nt overflowed its banks."

"Umph," replied Matt, "I knew that a week ago."

"Well," said Jack," "so did I, but I forgot it. We can get to the dam easily enough, though; it's only half a mile across the lowlands to the river, and there are fences all the way. Riding rail fences is bully fun. Wait till I get my rod; I've got two and I'll lend you one."

Jack extracted two bamboo rods from the blackberry thicket where he habitually kept them, lest they should occasion unpleasant questions, as they certainly would have done had his frequent expeditions with them begun at the house of his excellent father. Then both boys mounted the fence, which was of rails, and their trip to the dam was fairly begun.

Now to travel by fence-rail is a delightful method of passing time, as all liberally educated boys know, if one is bound for no where in particular, but when one is two, and both are boys, and are in

quest of fish, and the middle of the day is approaching, in which fish do not bite, half a mile of rail fencing is a trip which consumes patience with great rapidity. Had the adventurers been other than boys, they would have turned back at once, but when a boy gets a project clearly into his head he never gives any one an excuse to say that the mule is the most obstinate of all living animals. Jack soon grew impatient of his slow progress, and conceived a brilliant idea. Raising himself to his feet on a rail of reasonable flatness (for a fence rail) he steadied himself with his rod, and accomplished with safety and celerity the trip to the angle where the rail terminated.

"Hurrah, Matt!" he shouted, "look here!" and he walked along another rail.

Matt saw and was glad, and following Jack's example, he made some excellent time himself.

"We'd never have learned that trick if it hadn't been for the overflow. How glad I am that I came, and—Ow!" Jack's abrupt termination was due to his own course having temporarily terminated, for the third rail upon which he ventured, not having been designed for the particular object which Jack had in view, had been split triangularly, and one of

Jack's shoes had slipped to one side, the other slipping in an opposite direction, and the young man came down astride the unyielding oak with a thud whose sound was something inaudible when considered in the light of the anguish which it caused. No new word presented itself for use just then; Jack continued to remark "Ow," with a variety of long drawn inflections, while Matt precipitately lowered himself to a position of safety, and manifested no inclination to go farther. After some moments devoted strictly to facial contortion, Jack succeeded in changing his position so that both legs hung upon the same side of the fence, then he examined the rail closely, as if to see if the tip of his spine had not driven a hole through it, and remarked,

"We'd better do this in our stockinged feet."

Matt thought so too, so both both boys removed their shoes, tying them together with the strings upon which the fish were to be strung, and slinging them across their shoulders. Their progress thereafter was considerably more rapid, but a sudden shriek and a splash of voluminous sound and displacement announced that Matt had fallen entirely from his rail, and when Jack came to view the

scene, Matt was swelling the flood with his own tears.

"I declare," exclaimed Jack, "that's too bad, old fellow! And you had the worms in your pocket, too —I hope the water hasn't got into the box and drowned them so they can't wiggle when they're on the hooks. Say, its warm; your clothes will dry on you, before we reach the dam. Oh, I'll tell you what,—we'll take them off and wring them out, and go swimming at the same time."

At the prospect of an unlooked for sport, Matt dried his tears, and a broad flat rail having been found the boys disrobed and took whatever comfort could be found in water eighteen inches deep with a field of corn stubble at the bottom of it. Matt's clothes seemed rather clammy as he again resumed his normal position inside them, but Jack described so delightfully the assortment of fish which he wished to catch, that damp clothing became a mere thing of the forgotten past. Started again, Jack moved rapidly for some moments, but suddenly stopped and shouted,

"Hurry up, Matt; here's the splendidest thing that ever was!"

Matt obeyed orders, and while yet twenty rail lengths behind he heard Jack shout,

"Here's a bridge that floated away from one of the little brooks; we'll just make a raft of it and reach the dam in less than no time."

Matt eyed the bridge with manifest favor; it was simply two logs,—mud sills—connected by three cross-ties, upon which the planking was laid.

"Won't the current trouble us when we reach the river road?" he asked.

"We won't go that way," said Jack. "We'll go through the fields and then along a wood road that goes through the timber. It's half a mile the shorter way, besides being the safer. Come ahead; we'll use our rods for poles to push the raft with."

"Then we've got to knock down fences," said Matt.

"Well," said Jack, who had a conscience in hiding somewhere about him, "we'll come back in a few days, when the flood has gone down, and put them up again. And we'll play the raft is a ram—a regular Merrimac, you know,—and the fences are an enemy's fleet, or a chain stretched across the river. Let's back out and get a good start."

The bridge, which did not draw a foot of water, was backed across the road, one boy stood at each side, and at a signal from Jack it was driven against

the fence, through which it crashed most gloriously, sprinkling a dozen fence-rails about the surface of the water.

"Hooray!" shouted Jack, "now for the next one! The Union forever!" and then Jack, while *en route* for the next fence, finding himself unequal to the task of extemporizing a stirring address to his command, began to quote from "Rolla's Address to the Peruvians," which was considered the gem of that much used book, "The Comprehensive School Speaker"—"My brave associates, partners of my toils, my feelings and my fame, can Rolla's words add fresh vigor to the——"

Just then the raft struck the fence, but this latter being of the "staked and ridered"* pattern, the result was that the raft came to a sudden standstill, and the crew were thrown flat upon it, their respective heads hanging somewhat astern and in danger of being water-soaked.

"Blazes!" exclaimed Jack wrathfully, as he endeavored to staunch a bleeding nose, "what did a man need to have a staked and ridered fence just here for? Well, we'll have to push down a couple of stakes and break our way through."

* A rail-fence across the angles of which two rails meet in X shape, their lowest ends driven into the grounds a little way and a rail lying in the upper angle of the X.

The commanding officer's plan was speedily acted upon, and the raft went on swimmingly until it seemed to slide upon some obstruction, then it came to a dead stop.

"Grounded on an old corn hill, I suppose," said Jack. "Well, 'starn all,' as old Barnstable says in the Fourth Reader."

But no amount of pushing availed to move the raft, and the sudden breaking of Jack's rod gave affairs a new and discouraging aspect.

"We can't both fish with one rod," said Jack, after descending into and emerging from the depths of his mind. "I'll tell you what let's do, we'll take off our clothes, make them into a bundle, and carry them ashore on our heads, as explorers sometimes do when they ford rivers."

"What!" asked Matt, "and not get any fish for poor Mrs. Batty and her children?"

"That *is* a pity," said Jack, with some signs of embarrassment, and the gathering together of the loose and fleeting ends of previous plans and resolutions. "But, you see, it must be nearly eleven o'clock; we've used up an awful lot of time, and we've got to get ashore yet, and be back home by the time school is out, else the folks 'll know we've

been playing hookey. I wonder if we couldn't get the poor old woman some blackberries? It's only June now, though, and I never saw a ripe blackberry before the first of July. Perhaps there's some early cherries in Milman's orchard."

With this slight salve for the consciences whose wounds had begun to smart, the boys stripped once more, waded ashore through a corn-field in which the hills of sharp cut stalks seemed omnipresent, dressed themselves, and sneaked into the Milman orchard, where they made wry faces while discussing the probable value to the widow Battay of the few pale pink cherries they found. Dinner was reached and, eaten, somehow with less appetites than was usual after a morning spent in school, and then the boys, each by himself, made hasty search for whatever suitable material might be soonest found to insert between shirts and jackets, to break the force of what, in the memory of many old fellows who once were school-boys, was the inevitable penalty of truancy.

CHAPTER II.

A CORNER IN WHISKEY.

FOR several days after their unsuccessful fishing expedition, Jack and Matt were extremely obedient and undemonstrative. Village school teachers, in that country, were not unfrequently the stout-armed sons of farmers, and when they plied the rod, any memory of the occasion was not likely soon to become dimmed. It was perhaps for this reason that even when Matt or Jack amused himself by whistling, the airs selected were sure to have been written on minor keys, and that both boys sought earnestly, each by himself, for some method of setting some positive moral success against their late failure at benevolence.

The opportunity did not linger long. Matt was sitting in the house one evening, wondering whether to go to bed at once, or wrestle again with an exasperating problem in cube root, the answer to which, as

printed in the book, he felt thrice assured was wrong, when a long whistle of peculiar volume and inflection informed him that Jack was outside and had something to communicate. Matt sprang to his feet, for only a matter of extreme importance would have brought Jack across town at so late an hour. The worst boy in town was found by Matt to be hanging across the garden gate and so powerfully charged with virtuous indignation that he was unable to contain it all.

"Look here, Matt," said he, "you know what an awful thing whiskey is, don't you?"

"I should think I did," replied Matt, "Havn't I been to every temperance meeting that's been held?"

"So you have," said Jack, "Well what do you think? There's Hoccamine, the corner storekeeper, gone and bought seven barrels."

"Isn't that dreadful!" exclaimed Matt. "If he starts a rum-shop here, it'll spoil the custom of his store."

"He isn't going to have a bar," explained Jack, "he's going to sell by the gallon. But what's the difference?—rum is rum, and it does harm, no matter in what way it is sold."

"It's perfectly awful," said Matt.

"All right," said Jack, "Now I'll tell you what I propose. It wasn't brought up to the store until after dark—I suppose they were ashamed—and it is on the sidewalk beside their store, to be put down cellar as soon as the clerks come in the morning." Then Jack put his lips down to Matt's ear, and whispered, "Let's spill it for them?"

"Gracious!" whispered Matt, "how can we?"

"Easily enough," said Jack. "We'll bore a gimlet hole in each barrel, and it'll have all night to run. I've got a gimlet. You slip out of the house about twelve o'clock, and so will I; we'll meet at the church steps, and then unchain the demon only to destroy him forever." (Jack's last clause was quoted verbatim from a temperance address to which he had lately listened.)

"I'm your man," said Matt.

"I knew you would be," Jack replied; I could have done it alone, but I was sure you'd enjoy helping, and I'm not the sort of fellow that goes back on a friend, you know. Twelve o'clock sure, —does your clock strike the hours?"

"Yes."

'So does ours. Can you keep awake until then?

If you can't I'll give you half of my cloves to eat. I've saved them the past few Sunday nights when I havn't been sleepy in church."

Matt accepted the proffered assistance, and Jack departed, while Matt went into the house and to bed with the firm conviction that he was too excited to sleep any for a week to come. It was nine when he retired, and at the stroke of ten he had not had occasion to touch the cloves except to nibble the blossom end from one, just to have a pleasant taste in his mouth. It was many hours, apparently before the clock struck eleven; had it not been for the loud persistent ticking Matt would have believed the old timepiece had stopped. As it was, he had fully made up his mind that the striking weight had not been wound, when suddenly the hammer rattled off eleven. Between eleven and twelve, Matt ate all the cloves, pinched himself nearly black and blue, pulled his hair, rubbed his ears, and did everything else he had ever heard of as an antidote to sleepiness. Finally he dressed himself and descended, intending to be at the front door when the clock should strike. As he stepped from the last stair his foot fell upon the family cat, who habitually reposed upon a rug lying just

there, and the cry which that cat uttered was more appalling to Matt than the roar of a royal Bengal tiger would have been. Matt's parents, however, had clear consciences, so the agonized scream did not seem to awaken them. Then Matt's heart beat so violently that he began to wonder why the sound of its throbs did not shake the house. He tiptoed to the door, but his shoes squeaked, and though he experimented, by setting down his feet, heel first, by walking on the outer edge of his shoes, and then upon the inner, the squeak continued. Then he sat upon the floor and removed his shoes, when, to his great relief, the clock struck twelve. Why that clock did not rouse him with its clamor every night and every time it struck was a great mystery to him as he softly opened the door, closed it, sped away in his stockinged feet, and determined to smuggle a bit of soap out of the house and settle with those stockings before they went to the family washtub.

Reaching the church, Matt was sure he saw a shadow hold up a gaunt forefinger by way of warning, but this speedily resolved itself into Jack, who was elevating the gimlet, and who approached and whispered—

"In hoc signo vinces," as old Constantine says in the "Universal School History."

Both boys hugged every fence and wall until they reached the offending barrels; then Matt's heart began pumping again, receiving some sympathy from that of Jack. The last named youth suddenly whispered,

"Want to strike the first blow?"

"I guess not," said Matt, flattening himself as closely as possible against the wall of the store. "You thought of it first."

Jack knelt before one of the barrels, bored a hole as low as possible, and a small stream of liquid and a strong smell of whiskey appeared instantly and at the same time. Then another hole was bored at the top, to admit air, and the industry of the stream increased suddenly, as Jack learned by a jet which struck his own trowsers and made itself felt on the skin beneath. Matt operated upon the second barrel, Jack unlocked the demon in the third, and so the boys proceeded alternately, until while over the sixth barrel Matt's enthusiasm interfered with his steadiness of hand and he broke the gimlet.

"That's too bad," whispered Jack. "I guess we'd better leave, but old Hoccamine won't find five

empty barrels a very small hint to stop outraging the sentiments of the inhabitants of this town."

Both boys made haste to depart, wasting no time in formal adieux. As soon as they had reached the church and cemetery, in neither of which they feared listeners, Jack exclaimed in a low tone

"This is a proud day for Doveton, Matt; can't you make some excuse to come up town in the morning to hear Hoccamine swear when he learns about it?"

"I'll ask mother if she doesn't need something from some store," said Matt; "good night."

The boys went their separate ways, each unconsciously carrying the smell of whiskey in the shoe soles which had several times been wet with it, as they moved about the sidewalk, so when Mr. and Mrs. Bolton awoke in the morning, it was not strange that the lady exclaimed—

"Where can that strong smell of whiskey come from? I didn't know there was a drop in the house."

"Nor I," said Mr. Bolton. The odor could not be attributed to the servant, for she lived elsewhere, and had not yet come to her daily labor. Mrs. Bolton was not superior to the ordinary human interest in mystery, so she continued,

"Where can it be? Oh, husband, it can't be that Matt, our only darling boy, is getting into bad ways?"

Mr. Bolton sprang from his bed and hurried to Matt's room; there were too many other fourteen-year old boys in Doveton who had already trifled with liquor, and Matt's father had at once become suspicious. But he returned in a moment saying,

"Thank God, it isn't that; the blessed scamp's breath is as sweet as it was when he was a baby. But what can it be?"

Mr. Bolton quickly dressed himself and went through the house, but soon hurried back exclaiming—

"Thieves! The front door is ajar."

Both householders took part in a hasty search, but Mrs. Bolton found her silver spoons safe though they had been in plain view in a dining-room closet. Mr. Bolton found no clothing missing, nor could the subsequent search prove that anything whatever had been taken.

"I have it!" exclaimed Mrs. Bolton suddenly. "I heard the cat scream terribly in the night. It is plain that the rascal stepped upon her, and then ran away, supposing her noise would arouse the house. What a narrow escape!"

Matt slept throughout the excitement like one who has a conscience which was not only void of offense, but had the additional peace which comes of virtuous deeds successfully accomplished. It was only after considerable effort, indeed, that he could be roused at breakfast time. As for Jack, he was up long before the lark, and on his way to the market (which was opposite Hoccamine's store) to purchase some scraps of meat for a mythical dog. He meekly stood outside with his package, for what seemed to him centuries, awaiting the opening of Hoccamine's store. Then he hurried home, ate the merest excuse for a breakfast, and cooled his heels at Matt's woodpile for at least an hour, and when his companion finally appeared, yawning profoundly, Jack shouted—

"Oh, Matt, 'twas worth a million dollars. Hurry up, can't you?"

Matt quickly roused himself to consciousness that life was real, life was earnest, and joined Jack, who exclaimed—

"Fun? why there was oceans of it, with hundreds of lakes and ponds thrown in. First there came along old Burt, on his way to market, and as soon as he saw the stuff in little puddles by the

curbstone, and smelt what it was, he just lay down on his stomach and began to drink. He signed the pledge at the last temperance meeting, too ; isn't it awful? Then Captain Sands came along, and stopped to look, and so did Squire Jones and Joe, the barber, and everybody that came to market saw the crowd and went over, so I thought 'twas safe to go over myself. All of a sudden over came Hoccamine, who had been to market, and then—well, you never heard such swearing at a fight. He declared that somebody had been stealing it, and Squire Jones told him it was a righteous judgment on him, and then Hoccamine swore some more and called the Squire names, and the Squire said he'd never buy another penny's worth from a man who had abused him in that way, and Hoccamine told him to take his infernal pennies and buy of—of the old fellow down below, you know, if he chose. Then Hoccamine opened the store and got out some pails and scoop-shovels, and tried to save some of the liquor out of the gutter. Oh, it was just glorious." And Jack, unable to express his feelings in any other way, danced about madly and jumped over several logs of wood.

Then Matt, who has listened with considerable

interest, yet with a pre-occupied air, told the story of the attempted burglary, but explained away the supposition that the thief was scared off by the cat.

"That shows," said Jack, briskly, "how necessary the work was that we did last night. Whiskey made that thief, you see—I shouldn't wonder if what you were about at the same time had something to do with his being influenced to go away. Don't you know how these things happen in books sometimes? I once read—"

Jack suddenly ceased talking, but burst out laughing, and finally dropped upon the chips and rolled about in a perfect convulsion of laughter, while Matt looked on in mute astonishment.

"Oh, Matt," he exclaimed finally, "don't you understand? That smell of whiskey was on you somewhere—I smell it now. And you were so excited when you went in, that you forgot to latch the door—I've done the same thing, once or twice. Oh, oh, oh, that's too rich. I'll die if I can't tell somebody."

Matt immediately swore his companion to strict secresy, but later in the day, which happened to be Saturday, he became so uncomfortable at hear-

ing his father discuss the attempted burglary with everyone who entered the store that he confessed the whole affair to Mr. Bolton. That gentleman made a valiant effort at reproof, but he did not love Hoccamine more than business rivals usually love each other, and he was an earnest advocate of total abstinence, so he made some excuse to get at his account books, and for the remainder of the day he was subject to violent fits of laughter whenever he was not trying to truthfully modify his story of the burglary to the many acquaintances who came in to enquire about it.

CHAPTER III.

INJURY AND RESTITUTION.

DR. WITTINGHAM, whose only son Jack was, sat in his office one morning com pounding a complicated and consequently a favorite prescription of his own, and at the same time pondering upon the equally complicated character of his boy. The doctor had been a boy himself, a third of a century before, and an extremely lively one, if the traditions of his native village had been correctly handed down, but a man's memory is not in the habit of going backward half a lifetime, unless in search of old sweethearts, so the doctor owned to himself that Jack was without exception the most mischievous boy he had ever known or heard of.

"It passes all explanation, too," said the doctor, sitting down and watching his prescription as it filtered slowly into a glass beneath it. "I'm a man of good behavior if ever there was one, his mother was a lady born and bred, he knows the Bible better

than our minister does, and there's nothing good but what the boy seems to take a lively interest in. I was going to write a book upon heredity, basing it upon the development of that boy's character as inherited from his parents and modified by such teachings as I have imparted, to improve the original stock. But bless me! I'm sometimes unable to find the original stock at all, and as for the improvements I intend to make in it, well, they're as invisible as the ailments of some of my rich patients. Whatever I say to him seems to filter through him more rapidly than that mixture is doing through the paper, and leaves not even a sediment behind, while whatever he shouldn't hear seems to stick to him like an adhesive plaster. Before he goes to school, he recites his lessons to me in the most perfect manner; when he comes home he brings a written complaint from the teacher, who has found him outrageously mischievous all day long; and when his mother takes any of his torn jackets and trowsers in hand, she is certain to find two or three more documents of the same kind which Jack has kindly forgotten to deliver, perhaps out of regard for my feelings. He will chop wood all day Saturday for the Widow Batty or some other needy person, until I determine

he's growing to be too good to live; then my own dinner comes up underdone because he hasn't considered that wood-chopping, like charity, should begin at home. I've heard no complaints of him for nearly a week; there must be a terrible shower of them brewing somewhere."

There was a knock at the door, and the town supervisor of roads entered.

"Ah, good morning," said the doctor, briskly. "Who's under the weather now?"

"Wa'al," drawled the supervisor, "nobody, I reckon 'less its you. Here's a little bill I'm sorry to have to bring to you, but its had to be done."

The doctor took the paper from the Supervisor's hand and read as follows:

"Dr. Andrew Wittingham to town of Doveton, Dr. One-half cost of replacing Second Brook Bridge, $11.62."

"What on earth does this mean?" exclaimed the doctor after reading the bill several times.

"Bolton has paid the other half," said the supervisor; "its for that bridge that Jack and Matt hooked, you know, and left in the middle of Prewitt's corn field half a mile from where it belonged."

"Hooked a bridge?" exclaimed the doctor, "I

don't understand. Jack never said anything to me about it."

"Didn't he?" asked the supervisor with an ironical grin. "Wa'al, like enough he didn't; 'twas during the June freshet, you know, an' the boys found it loose, an' went raftin' around on it. Like enough they'd have fetched it back, but they rammed it through one fence after another, an' at last they got it aground. We tried to get it under a log wagon an' haul it back, but 'twas no go, an' we havn't put the hire of the wagon into the bill, for the man wasn't to charge anything if he didn't get it through. Shouldn't wonder, though, if Prewitt brought in a bill for damages, he says it'll do him out of twenty hills of corn, besides being a nuisance to plough around. An' he and the next man are out about a dozen fence rails each."

The doctor recognized the inevitable, yet remarked that the price seemed a large one for a bridge in a country where lumber was so cheap.

"Just what it cost," remarked the supervisor, "the whole thing came to $23.25, an' in dividin' I threw the odd cent on to Bolton, for I think the medical profession ought to be encouraged."

The doctor paid the bill, and bade his visitor a

rather curt good morning. Then he went to the door and shouted "Jack!" in tones which would have been heard by the young man if he had been at school, which he was not.

"Jack," said the doctor, sternly, when the youth appeared, "I've just had to pay for a bridge which you stole in June."

"I didn't," promptly answered the boy.

"It amounted to the same thing, in dollars and cents, as stealing," said the doctor. "How many hours of fun did you have that day?"

Jack thought profoundly for a minute or two, and replied, meekly,

"About two, I suppose."

"And to pay for those I have had to lose the receipts of about a day of hard, disgusting work. Do you consider that the fair thing, for one who is doing everything he can for your good?"

"No, sir," replied Jack, honestly contrite in the presence of this new view of the case.

"Then why did you do it?"

"Because."

"Because what?"

"Because."

"Because you're an ungrateful scamp, and don't care for anything but your own pleasure."

"Yes I do, father," said Jack, beginning to cry, I"——

"Don't make excuses, sir," interrupted the doctor; "you shall do extra work, at whatever a laborer would be paid, to make up the cost of that bridge, and do it on your holidays and Saturdays, too. Now I want you to go and burn that old bridge, or I'll have to pay for the annoyance it will give Prewitt."

Jack lingered for a moment, as bad boys often do on such occasions, longing to say something which he could not put into words, and to hear some recognition of what he felt was good within him. Had the doctor used a mere tithe of the patience and love that Heaven had been compelled to display in reforming him, he might have attached Jack to him by that love which is the best of all educators in things wise and thoughtful. But the doctor, like the boy, lived first, though unconsciously, for himself, and so with an impatient gesture he drove Jack from the door. The boy filled a pocket with matches and lounged off, muttering to himself,

"It'll be bully fun to burn the old bridge, anyhow, I shouldn't wonder if it would take a couple of days, and there'll be that much school time gone, but I

say—Matt ought to be made to help—oh, wouldn't that be jolly! I'll go ask his father right away—everybody calls him an honest man, and he oughtn't to see me paying Matt's debts."

Jack hurried at once to Mr. Bolton's store; as he entered, the proprietor, who was alone, picked up a hoe-handle, and exclaimed—

"You young scoundrel, I've a good mind to break every bone in your rascally body. Don't you ever dare to coax my boy to go anywhere with you again, or I'll half kill you. You're the worst boy in town."

Rightly assuming that the opportunity for presenting his request was not a promising one, Jack departed at once, and hung about the schoolhouse until the mid-morning intermission; then he seized Matt and announced the situation, taking care to omit mention of his interview with Bolton senior. Matt at once volunteered assistance, and an hour later the boys had burning upon the bridge a glorious fire of dead boughs and broken rails. When the boards had burned in two, the boys pried the two logs toward each other, and thereafter they adjusted the logs several times, getting each time some smut upon their clothes as well as occasional burns

upon their hands. When at length the logs seemed able to take care of themselves the boys strewed some green twigs upon the ground to lie on, and as they were stretched upon them, chatting in the desultory manner peculiar to every one who lies down about a fire, Jack remarked,

"Say Matt, do you know that people in this world are awfully unfair to boys?"

"I guess I do," replied Matt, "but what made you think of it just now?"

"Why, my govenor gave me fits this morning about this bridge, and called me ungrateful and all sorts of things. I s'pose he thought he told the truth, but I know better. I'd do anything for him —I'd die for him. Why, one day that big mulatto Ijam, that he can never collect his bills of, came in looking awful ugly, and blazing about being sued, and I was sure he meant to hurt father; I just got a hatchet and stood outside the door, ready to rush in and tomahawk him if he did the least thing. It made me late at school, and I got licked for that, but I didn't care, and the teacher wrote a note home about it and I got scolded, but I didn't tell what I'd done."

"My father's the same way, sometimes," said Matt.

"I know he is," said Jack, hastily debating (with decision in the negative) whether he should tell of his own morning experience with Mr. Bolton.

"Now," continued Jack, "I've got to work all my holidays at something, I don't know what, until I earn enough money to pay my share of that bridge —you know the two govenors have had to settle for a new one?"

"Mercy, no!" exclaimed Matt.

"They have, this morning," said Jack. "I shouldn't wonder if you'd catch it when you go home, but there's some bully mullein leaves under the hill that you can put inside the back of your jacket."

Matt devoted some moments of disagreeable reflection to this topic; then his sense of companionship came to the surface, and he said—

"I'll help you, Jack—unless father punishes me in the same way. What do you suppose you'll have to do?"

"I don't know yet," said Jack, "but I've got a splendid idea. The govenor has just bought his winter's supply of wood, as he generally does in June, and he always has it cut while its green because it costs only a dollar and a quarter a cord,

while the men charge a dollar and a half when its seasoned. I'll ask him to let me work it out in that way."

"Why, Jack," remonstrated Matt, "it will take you more than half a year of holidays."

"No, it won't," said Jack, "I can chop nearly a cord a day when I work hard. Besides, I've got an idea worth more than my own industry. I'm going to blow at school, and around among the boys, about what a splendid wood-chopper I am."

"I'll say the same thing about you," said Matt.

"All right; we'll both talk of my particular swing with the axe until the whole crowd will be mad enough to take the conceit out of me at any price. Then I'll offer a bet of someting worth having—a half-dollar against half a dime, say—that I can chop and split more in a single day than any other boy in town. Lots of them will take up the bet, we'll appoint a day, the place to be our wood, pile, and every boy to bring his own axe. You shall be umpire, so you won't have to do anything but walk about and egg the others up to business."

This brilliant device took complete possession of Matt, and as for Jack, within a week there was not a boy in town who could pass him without making

a face at him, and scarcely a mother dependant upon her own boys for fuel but had an abundant supply without having to beg for it. Many indignant boys offered indefinite bets in favor of their own skill with the axe, but the sagacious Jack declined them all on the ground that he could not honorably bet on what he called a sure thing. When finally he offered his own wager, it was accepted by acclamation by nearly the whole of his own arithmetic class, numbering twenty-nine. The boys from the other school hoped they were not to be excluded just because they lived in a different part of the town, and Matt went on a special mission to them to assure them that this was to be, figuratively speaking, an international contest, in which all territorial lines were to be as if they existed not. Some other boys who never went to school, hardened young rowdies, who, as a rule did nothing, and accumulated a large stock of vitality which was not always expended in proper ways, heard of the approaching match, swore by all sorts of persons, places and things that they only wished they might "take a whack at that game," and were cordially invited to participate. Then the would-be contestants met in convention,

and Jack formally deposited his half dollar in the hands of Matt, who was to be stake-holder. There being some difficulty in deciding how the bets against Jack were to be held, the challenger magnanimously declined to accept any bet, if the crowd would agree, each for himself, that the man who cut least, and he alone, should be loser of a half dime in case of Jack's triumph.

After a fair canvass of conflicting interests as to date, which involved the withdrawal of several boys who had agreed to go fishing or shooting, or berrying, or visiting, it was decided that the ensuing Saturday morning would be the most available time, particularly as Jack explained that his father who, he was sure, would stop the whole thing if he heard of it in advance, would start before daylight that morning to attend a consultation miles away by rail. The idea that the proceeding would be displeasing to any adult silenced at once the objections of all who had preferred another date, and it even brought back the boys who had pleaded prior engagements.

As for Dr. Wittingham, he was completely astounded and wonderfully pleased when Jack, with a frank business-like air, proposed to cut the

ten cords of winter wood as an offset to the bridge bill of eleven dollars and sixty-two cents. The doctor patted Jack's head, called him a noble fellow, gave him a stick of licorice, and promised him a dollar for himself on the completion of the work.

"Now," said the doctor, when Jack had left his presence, "I think I've a good hard point for that work on heredity; Impose a rational penalty for offense, and its manifest justice will improve both the reasoning and moral nature of the offender."

CHAPTER IV

SHARP AXES AND SHARPER WITS.

DURING the week preceding the great contest with axes there was very little truancy, fighting or bad hours to be complained of by the parents of the boys of Doveton. The excitement natural to an approaching struggle was sufficient even for the nerves of the most irrepressible juvenile natures in town. Most of the boys went into training at their respective family wood piles, and those who had no uncut wood on hand resorted to the unprecedented operation of requesting permission to work at that of somebody else. The story of the bet became noised abroad, beyond the limits of the town, and several sturdy country boys having signified their desire to earn fifty cents by a half day's work, the crowd allowed them to enter for the contest, for anything was more endurable than Jack Wittingham's conceit; Jack himself welcomed them, of course, in the most hearty manner in the world.

Toward the last of the week the sound of the grindstone was heard in the land, and as several boys had asked and received permission to use saws instead of axes, the melodious voice of the hand saw file arose to stimulate in nervous persons of religious tendencies an increased appreciation of the promised peace of Heaven. Then every carpenter who owned a boy of wood-chopping age suddenly missed his best oil stone, and sundry axes had their edges dressed so keenly that no one denied their owner's assertions that a man might shave himself with those axes and not know but they were rabbit paws or puff balls. The juvenile rowdies, who treasured old copies of sporting papers, read up on the training of prize-fighters, with the result that they indulged in ablutions with unhabitual frequency, and took an amount and variety of exercise which threatened to exorcise the demon which inhabits the juvenile loafer.

The morn of the eventful day dawned at last, and, early as it was when Doctor Wittingham had to start for the railway station, there was already approaching his woodpile fat Billy Barker, who was so treacherous a sleeper that he had remained awake all night so as to be on hand in time in the morning.

Then one of the loafers, whose family owned no time-piece, lounged up, and made Billy very uncomfortable with prophecies that a certain boy would hardly escape melting on such a warm day as that particular Saturday promised to be, and that only a pair of leg boots conld be trusted to save enough of the remains to justify a full sized funeral. Then one of the country boys appeared, riding bareback upon an ancient mare, and his extreme taciturnity became as annoying to Billy as the chaffing of the loafer had been, while the loafer himself visibly abated his arrogance by a degree or two. Then the Pinkshaw twins approached, each with an axe in one hand and a piece of bread and butter in the other. Matt Bolton came next, quite out of breath, for though he had half an hour to spare, a sense of his official responsibility had somehow impelled him to run every step of the way from his own home. Lame Joey Wilson staggered in soon after, with his heavy "saw horse" and saw, and close behind him came a country boy whose family had brought him as far as the main street in the farm wagon. Then two loafers, successful catchers of occasional saw logs and drift wood, lounged up from the river. Several boys from the neighborhood known as the

other side of town, approached in a body, led by big Frank Parker, who was the largest boy in school and who it was always considered a privilege to follow. Then as the hour for business came nearer, boys approached from all directions so rapidly that they could scarcely be catalogued, and when Matt drew his sister's watch from his pocket for the twentieth time and announced that it was ten minutes of eight, there were present forty-three boys, five horses (belonging to the delegation from the country), besides three unemployed men who had come to look on. The stalwart appearance of some of the larger contestants terrified certain small, weak and lazy boys into determining to throw up the sponge in advance, but when the challenger, the boastful Jack himself, sauntered out from the house with an axe on his shoulder, a toothpick in his mouth and an intolerable air of self-sufficiency in his face, the nerves of the most timid boy grew suddenly as fine as steel, and he determined to drop lead on his axe rather than let that bragging Jack crow over him any longer.

Suddenly Matt mounted the wood pile, consulted his sister's watch, and exclaimed—

"Only five minutes more. Now, fellows, this is

to be a fair fight, you know. Every man picks his own place, carries wood to it from the pile, cuts each stick into three equal lengths, and throws in front of him whatever he chops. If at twelve o'clock there's any doubt who has done most, the biggest piles are to be laid up straight against a stake, and carefully measured. Nobody need split his wood. When it's time to begin, I'll holloa 'One, two, three—go!' and when twelve o'clock comes I'll say 'One, two, three—stop!' I'll have a pail of water and a cup here by the fence, for anyone who wants a drink."

The boys were already carrying the four foot sticks of wood to their chosen locations, and between the confusion of selecting desirable places and that occasioned by snatching from a wood-pile which did not afford elbow-room for forty-three boys at a time, there was considerable bad feeling engendered, and sundry punishments with impolite names were promised for the indefinite future. The country boys had judiciously hugged the ends of the wood-pile from the moment of their arrival, which prospective advantage certain other boys attempted to nullify by taking wood from the ends, and there might have ensued a serious collision had

not Matt, who had moved the judge's stand from the wood-pile to the fence, shouted,

"Eight o'clock. One, two, three—go!"

Thirty-nine axes came down nearly as one, and four saws began a not discordant quartette across the bark of sundry sticks, while the three unemployed men thrust their hands deep into their pockets and adjured the boys, collectively, to "go in." A chip from fat Billy Barker's axe started to avenge Billy upon his tormentor of an hour before, and it struck the loafer in the back of the neck with such force that the bad boy howled with anguish, and volubly condemned his soul to all sorts of uncomfortable places and conditions. The axes soon broke the uniformity of their stroke; some flew at the rate of nearly a blow a second, others, particularly those of the country boys, were slow, but oh, so regular! Still others, confined almost exclusively to the loafers, struck the wood rapidly and with a particularly vicious hardness which was not without its influence upon boys of small spirit. The peculiar ringing of an occasional "glance" was heard, and soon a yell from Scoopy Brown, who was a very awkward boy, called general attention to that youth, who was sitting upon the

ground holding one of his feet and weeping bitterly. A careful examination determined that his axe had not gone deeper than the stocking, so Scoopy dried his tears and began work again, his spirits sharpened by many uncomplimentary remarks by the loafers and others who had lost time by stopping work to look at him.

Within a quarter of an hour fat Billy Barker had visited the water-pail three times; a quarter of an hour later he was curled up with agony beside the fence, his only consolation consisting in making dreadful faces at the big loafer who had proved a tolerable prophet. At the same time two other boys, one of whom had broken an arm within three months, and the other being so small that he realized the folly of contending against many large boys, retired from the contest, and took place among the spectators, who already consisted of seven men, one woman (with baby) and two dogs. Then one of the loafers declared that although he could beat as easily as falling off a log, fifty cents wouldn't pay for half a day of work under such a sun. Of the spare forty who remained, nearly half were of apoplectic hue, so that Matt the umpire, consulting his sister's watch, felt in duty bound to

inform them that barely half an hour had elapsed, and that they would never get through the morning unless they took things easier.

As for Jack, he did splendidly. With great sagacity he had selected the largest sticks, these requiring less handling, and fewer delays between an old stick and a new one, besides making a heap look more bulky. His axe was in capital condition, as his physique always was, his nerve was equally good, and he had the additional incentive of wanting to keep up the general interest, which would be sure to flag if he were discovered to be falling behind. The country boys led him a close race, and compelled him to do his best, as did also two of the loafers. At the end of the first hour, Matt the umpire, who had attended closely to his sister's watch for the ten minutes preceding, shouted "Nine o'clock," and most of the country boys stopped for a brief rest. Jack was glad to follow their example, and at the same time one of the loafers took a flask bottle from his pocket and swallowed considerable whiskey. A request, proffered by another loafer, that the bottle be passed was met by a reply similar in tenor to that given by the five wise virgins to their foolish companions,

and the apparent meanness of this proceeding made even the weariest boy determine to at least beat that particular loafer.

Half-past nine came, and with it a loud snap which proved to proceed from the saw block of lame Joey Wilson. As Joey was a very pleasant little fellow, with a widowed mother whose lot in life was not the easiest, another boy, who had a saw, pressed it upon Joey, and thus honorably retired from a contest which had kept his back aching frightfully for nearly an hour. Then two or three other boys honestly acknowledged themselves completely used up, and they retired to such shade as the fence afforded and constituted themselves an invalid corps of observation. The loafer who had drank the whiskey dropped suddenly, muttered something about sunstroke, and crawled away unlamented by any one.

At the cry of "Ten o'clock!" the working force had dwindled to twenty-seven axes and two saws. Two boys had been legitimately summoned from the field by their legal guardians, and at least half a dozen others longed earnestly for a similar fate. Jack began to be doubtful of the entire success of his scheme, but the country boys all stuck manfully

to business, and at least one of them was beginning to show signs of becoming excited. The remaining loafers, too, hung on very well, and so did a spare half dozen of other boys, mostly large. The crowd was still large and industrious enough to astonish several farmers who drove into town, and the road became literally paved with chips. The invalid corps increased at about the rate of four men an hour between ten and eleven, but by this time Jack's mind was easy, for the only danger was that there would not be wood enough left with which the fittest who survived could complete the half day. Nearly all the loafers broke down, as loafers always do during the decisive hour, and the strife narrowed down to the country boys, one loafer, big Frank Parker, lame Joey Wilson and Jack. Each boy had his special adherents; the loafers cheered their own representative with much outlandish language, most of the men encouraged the country boys, the delegation from the other side of town urged big Frank Parker to "lay himself out," to "come down lively," to "sling himself," and to do many other things which to the youthful mind seem best signified by idioms of great peculiarity, but the mass of sympathy was pretty equally

divided between Jack and lame Joey Wilson. Eligible sticks of wood began to be sought at the piles of those who had abandoned the contest, and Matt the umpire had to exert the extreme measure of his authority to prevent the partizans of the two favorites from rushing in and carrying wood for them. The breaking of the axe-helve of one of the country boys elicited a tremendous roar from the entire assemblage, which was now upon its feet. The lame Joey Wilson faction began to sing the chorus "Go in lemons, if you do get squeezed," which was known to be Joey's favorite air and the song stimuated Joey wonderfully, noting which fact the adherents of Jack started "John Brown's body lies mouldering in the grave," which Jack was known to consider the finest thing ever written. But somehow the tune did not stimulate Jack as it was expected to do; perhaps the words with which the air is indissolubly associated had a depressing effect upon him, besides, the two songs were roared with about equal volume of sound, and as they are written in different keys, measures, and time, the general effect was horribly discordant and annoying to a tired man.

At half past eleven the remaining sticks, like

angels' visits, became far between, and finally dwindled to one, over which two of the country boys fought, dropping it in their struggle, to be triumphantly snatched and sawed by lame Joey Wilson. Then Matt, the umpire, first ascertaining from his sister's watch that it was not yet twelve o'clock, announced that any man might take a stick from any other man who had uncut sticks before him. At thirteen minutes of twelve, five of the six country boys were upon their last sticks and the other had a single stick yet uncut before him, which seemed to lie between Jack and lame Joey Wilson. Jack's axe glanced several times and Joey got the stick, and at precisely ten minutes before twelve Joey had the last stick reposing in three pieces upon his pile. The whole crowd rushed in, but Matt shouted—

"Everybody get back—quick—get back! every man piles his own wood!"

Some little delay occasioned by the difficulty of getting stakes against which to stake the piles which seemed largest, was ended by an order to pile against the fence. It was generally admitted, by every one but the country boys, that the decision must be between Jack and Joey, and as Jack was quick upon his feet and Joey, an account of his

lame leg, was slow, the former was allowed to assist the latter, but no one noticed that Jack took considerable wood from the piles of the boys who had been unsuccessful with the saw; the result was that Joey's pile was so much the larger that no one insisted upon a measurement, and Matt handed the half dollar to lame Joey Wilson without a protest from any one, though the shouts that went up formed a conglomerate sound which was truly appalling to any adult ear which it reached.

Then the boys separated and started homeward with their respective axes, saws, and saw-horses. Dr. Wittingham met several of them, as he returned at an earlier hour than Jack had expected from his consultation. What to make of the unusual number of business looking boys he did not know, but as he went around to the wood-pile to see how his son had begun his self-imposed penalty, the truth dawned upon him, and he exclaimed:

"I've used every evening this week upon that chapter of heredity, and now it isn't worth the paper it's written on!"

CHAPTER V.

EXPERIMENTS IN GRAVITATION.

AS June disappeared in the beginning of July, the long vacation of the Doveton schools began, and with it began Dr. Wittingham's special and particular annual annoyance, which consisted of keeping Jack out of mischief. To compel the boy to work all the while was something at which the good doctor's heart naturally revolted, but it seemed that when Jack was unoccupied even for half an hour an indignant complaint by some one was absolutely sure to follow. The doctor was not the only man who had charge of a boy of mischieveous tendencies, so there was considerable private jubilation among parents when a lone foreigner strayed into the town, announced himself as a Polish exile, and offered to carry a class in French through the summer vacation. The French language was not held in intelligent esteem by all Doveton parents, but every one of them understood the value of

peace of mind, so within forty-eight hours the exile was guaranteed an eight weeks class of twenty boys, at six dollars per boy, and was granted the upper floor of one of the school-houses free of rent.

This arrangement for the consumption of the summer vacation did not meet Jack's views at all, and he protested so strongly that the doctor yielded, after exacting perfect behavior as the price of liberty. Jack promised; he would have promised anything rather than have spent all those delicious days indoors. There was altogether too much out-of-doors that demanded his attention; the blackberry harvest in which Jack earned most of his year's spending money, came in July; the march of civilization was working destruction with hazel-nut patches, so that prudent boys desired to know in advance where not to go in the fall; it was the "off year" for black walnuts, so it was advisable to ascertain where were the few trees which neglected to be in the fashion; there were several young orchards which had bloomed for the first time, and must be visited for sampling purposes, lest perchance there might some very early varieties come into bearing and be gathered before he had seen

them, slippery elm bark was not entirely past its prime, several new kinds of fish-bait were to be tested on the perch which Jack was sure dwelt in jealous seclusion in certain deep holes in the river, the country district was to be scoured for new litters of puppies of desirable breed—in short Jack had so much work laid out that the vacation promised to be a very busy one.

But by the time the French class had been in session a week, Jack began to feel unutterably lonesome. Matt was in the class; so was lame Joey Wilson, who was always a pleasant companion; the Pinkshaw twins, who had no equal as tree-climbers, were also there, and so was big Frank Parker, whose superior strength and wisdom were not to be despised. Jack gave unwonted attention to the family garden so as to be within sound of the mid-morning intermission, and when the teacher's bell summoned the boys back to school again, Jack not unfrequently sat upon the school wood-pile during the long hour which ensued before the dismissal which brought him and the boys together again. Then satan began to find mischief for Jack's idle hands, and small pebbles not unfrequently flew into the open windows of the school-room, occasioning pleasing diversions

for the boys and annoyance for the teacher. Every body knew who threw them, but when questioned by the teacher they all, with general mental reservation, professed utter ignorance. The exile-teacher was not of the best temper, so he took his stand near a window, with the text-book in one hand and half a brick in the other, but Jack, warned by friendly hands hanging out of the windows of the side upon which the teacher stood, operated from the other side and occasioned many spirited races against time, the teacher's course being across the schoolroom, while Jack's goal was the friendly shelter of the schoolhouse porch. But even this diversion grew tiresome, and Jack, from pure loneliness, finally came to sneaking up the stairway, sitting on the floor of the hall, and listening by the hour to what to him seemed the idiotic jabber of his late schoolmates.

Then listening itself grew tiresome; besides, the position was uncomfortable, so one day Jack climbed up the little hatchway which led to the cockpit and belfry, laid a board across several beams, stretched himself upon it, and listened at ease, for there were sundry cracks in the ceiling. Jack was not long in discovering that one of these cracks, in its meander-

ings, passed directly over the teacher's chair, and that sundry small fragments of plaster could be scratched from its sides and dropped upon the exile's head.

This discovery aroused the inventive spirit which seems dormant in the mind of every American, waiting only for appropriate occasion to call it forth, Jack carefully marked that portion of the crack which directly overhung the teacher's head. He remained where he was until school was dismissed; then he cautiously picked at the side of the crack, between two laths, until it was wide enough to admit a grain of corn dropped edgewise; then he went below, dusted away the fallen plaster with his hat, and went home through the unlocked door with a feeling that the next morning was at least six weeks away.

But the next morning came, according to all correct timepieces, at the proper hour, and the French class had got fairly under way upon some of the exasperating paradigms of an irregular verb, when suddenly a grain of corn fell upon the bald head of the exile. Fat Billy Barker, who was abler at staring than studying, happened to see the falling body, and as the startled teacher arose from his chair,

Billy began to laugh. The teacher immediately marked him as the offender, dashed at him and gave him several hard blows with a switch, after which Billy put his head down upon his desk, wept, and declined to make a statement. But the teacher had hardly reseated himself when another missile of the same sort had struck him; Billy's head and hands being still down, the teacher exclaimed,

"Oh, Barkare, zen it was not you; I vill apologize, Barkare,—I have mooch sorrow. Vatever boy it vas should be whipped by Barkare!"

Again the recitation began and another grain of corn fell, this time in full view of the entire school. A general titter resulted, and this so enraged the teacher that he strolled rapidly down the aisles, displaying two rows of terribly white teeth, and shaking his ruler at nearly every boy individually. This operation had a very sobering effect, and even Jack was so appalled by the noise of the teacher's footfalls that he remained quiet nearly an hour. Finally he dropped two grains in quick succession, and the boys, who had been feverishly awaiting something new, laughed aloud with one accord. The teacher sprang to his feet, seized both ruler and switch, and roared

"Now, who did it? Barkare, you vill tell me, an' let me avenge ze vipping you did haf?"

Billy gulped down the truth and declared he did not know.

"Vilson," shouted the teacher, "you is ze good boy of ze school; you will tell me, I know, Vilson?"

But Joey, looking as innocent as if he were saying his prayers, shook his head negatively.

"Mistare Frank Parkare," continued the teacher, "you haf nearly ze years of a man, and cannot enchoy to see ze destruction of discipline. Who vas it that throw ze corn-grain."

And big Frank Parker unblushingly and solemnly said that he did not know.

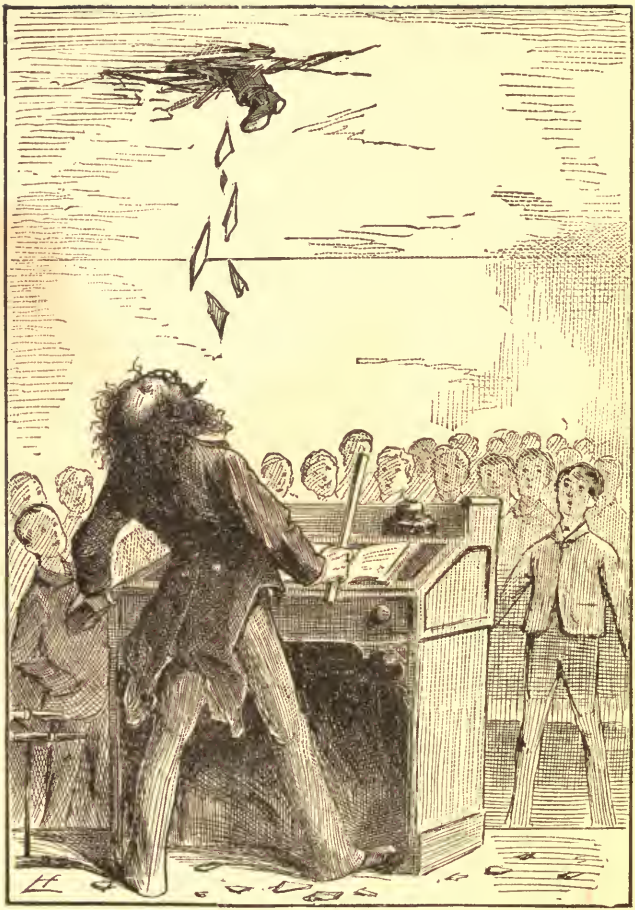
"Efferybody tell me," exclaimed the teacher, resuming his chair with dignity, "or ze class will stay in ze room till it starve to death. How like you zat, mes garçons, eh?"

The boys did not seem particularly to enjoy the prospect, and Jack himself sobered somewhat at the thought of inflicting such a penalty upon his friends. But just there he conceived a new idea, and emerging quietly from his hiding place, he ran home, obtained a vial from his father's office, filled it with

water, and hurried back. He was anxious to see as well as to hear the result of his impending operation, so he removed his board. lay along one of the beams, steadying himself by his left hand, and held the mouth of the vial over the teacher's head. Lame Joey Wilson was just translating fragmentarily, as follows:

"Avez-vous-le-chien-rouge-du-charpentier-avec—"

What the carpenter-owner of the dog really had, remained unexplained during the remainder of the session. Jack had intended to let but a single drop of water fall, and he could generally trust his hand at such work, for his father sometimes allowed him to assist in compounding prescriptions. But on this particular occasion anticipation proved too much for reality, for Jack laughed to himself so violently over the fun about to ensue that his hand shook, a stream of water poured through the hole, and trickled all over the teacher's chair. And, worse still, Jack discovered that a two-inch beam is not a safe place of repose for the human frame in moments of profound agitation, for he lost his balance, tried to save it with one elbow and one foot, which between them dislodged great masses of plaster from the laths and dropped it upon the teacher's desk.



EXPERIMENT IN GRAVITATION.

p. 61.

Even then the truth might not have been suspected, had not Jack, frightened at the mischief he had caused, lost all self-control and tumbled off the beam and upon the laths. Crack! Crack! went several laths, a violent commotion was heard upon the remainder, and, as the school started to its feet and the teacher dropped back in terror, a boy's foot and a section of trowser-leg appeared for an instant through a hole in the ceiling, only to be instantly withdrawn.

"Ah!" snarled the exile, seizing his half brick and ruler, and starting for the hall, "I haf ze villain!" The entire class followed, in time to hear a rustling sound and to see the teacher's half brick go up the hatchway, through which the bell rope was being rapidly drawn.

The teacher danced frantically about and shouted, "Somebody go for the police—ze constable, what you call him! I would gif five dollare if I had my pistol viz me here. Somebody bring one little laddare—zen I go up ze hole an' drag down ze diable. I show you vat I do, you bring me ze laddare!"

Nobody stirred; every one preferred to remain as spectator. Suddenly the teacher's half brick descended, followed by a nail keg, a dusty roll of discarded maps, and a piece of board.

"It is one *attaque de force!*" exclaimed the teacher, retiring precipitately upon the feet of lame Joey Wilson, who had squeezed well to the front. "Ze rascal shall go to ze prison. Will nobody go for ze constable?" Zen I will give ze alarm from out ze window."

The exile put his head out the window, just in time to see Jack, who had thrown the bell rope over the front of the building, sliding down the same, and making dreadful faces because of the pain which friction occasioned in his hands and legs. With a fiendish yell the teacher threw the ruler, which missed Jack. Just as the young man felt that the rope was no longer between his knees yet the ground not invitingly near, the teacher reappeared with an inkstand which he threw with such excellent aim that it struck Jack in the side. The boy immediately loosened his hold and dropped about fifteen feet, striking upon his side. In an instant he was upon his feet and hurrying homeward without as much hilarity as might have been expected, for in falling he had broken his left arm.

CHAPTER VI.

"When the devil was sick
The devil a saint would be."

THE only consolation that Master Jack could conjure up, as he carried his broken arm home, was that his father would undoubtedly consider the disaster a sufficient punishment for the offense. Jack could not at first imagine why his arm should indulge in such sudden and terrible twinges and object so nervously to being rubbed or held. The pain which it experienced from the shaking consequent upon running caused Jack to subside into a walk as soon as he had assured himself that he was not followed; even then the pain gave no indication of subsiding. Suddenly the truth dawned upon the boy's mind, and between the shock occasioned by the discovery and the sense of at least a month of vacation to be utterly lost, Jack became so weak and faint that when he at last reached home he dropped upon the office step and his head fell heavily against the door. The

doctor, who fortunately was at home, opened hastily and exclaimed,

"Well, what's the latest?"

"Oh, father," gasped Jack, "I've tumbled, and I'm afraid my arm is broken."

The doctor helped the boy into a chair, eliciting a howl as he did so. A short examination of the arm caused additional howling, and during the quarter hour consumed by the operation of setting, Jack abandoned all preconceived ideas of the nature of fun. Finally, when the doctor carefully removed his clothing, put him into bed, and told him he would have to lie there for at least a fortnight, Jack dragged the pillow up to his face with his unhurt arm, and moistened it most uncomfortably with tears. Half an hour later, when his father had broken the news to his mother, who had nerves, and the lady came up to see him, she found him sobbing violently.

"Jack, Jack," she exclaimed, "this will never do. There is always a fever with arms broken above the elbow, and if you excite yourself it will come on too soon, and it may destroy your reason."

"I wish it would," sobbed Jack, "I'd a great deal rather be crazy than lie here in my senses all through

this jolly, awful month. I can't pick a blackberry, and I can't have any money for Christmas, and I know Frank Parker guesses one of the new baits I was going to try on the perch, and it'll be just like him to go and catch every one of them. It's just horrid."

"Jack!" remonstrated Mrs. Wittingham, "can't you think how horrid it is for you to go and break your arm, and make more work for every body in the house?"

"Yes," said Jack, "but you don't think that makes me feel any better, do you?"

"Then," said Mrs. Wittingham, "you should take your suffering as a judgment from the Lord."

"He might have put it off until after vacation, anyhow," exclaimed the bad boy, at which Mrs. Wittingham clapped her fingers to her ears and fled, and informed her husband in almost the same breath, that the dreadful boy deserved a sound whipping even now, and that nothing but the grace of God could ever make Jack what he should be.

But after Jack had recovered from his rage, and had been surprised into taking a short nap, he began to view the situation in about the light which his mother would have liked him to use. It cer-

tainly had been great fun to tease that French teacher—the thought of it provoked even now a merry chuckle which a twinge of the arm suddenly discouraged—but it was equally certain that the teacher himself did not seem to enjoy it. As for sliding down a bell rope, no boy had ever done it before, to Jack's knowledge, but oh, how his hands were smarting! The more he thought of them the worse they burned; he must have something cooling put upon them, even if he had to confess how he came by them. Some one would be sure to tell his father of his exploits at the schoolhouse, so why shouldn't he confess in advance and get the credit for it?

May be the broken arm was a judgment upon him, as his mother suggested. Well, he would admit that he deserved it, though he still doubted the necessity for its infliction at this particular season of the year. He would do his best to learn by it, anyhow—he certainly was going to have time enough in which he could do nothing else. So Jack confessed, and had his hands treated to a cooling lotion. The doctor, having previously heard the story from the vivacious tongue of the outraged exile himself, and having spent a delightful hour, partly retrospec-

tive, in laughing over the latest capers of his son, was in a position to listen with judicial gravity and to express his horror at frequent intervals and in fitting terms. Then Jack listened to a long and solemn lecture which was more wordy than pithy, and was told that he must avoid even exciting subjects of thought for a fortnight to come.

"Mayn't Matt come to see me?" asked Jack in faltering tones.

"Only for two or three minutes at a time," said the doctor; "even conversation will excite you."

"I want to talk to him," said Jack.

"Why can't you talk to your mother and me?" asked the doctor.

It is beyond all things astonishing what silly questions may be asked by sensible men when they have forgotten their own boyhood days, and it is not surprising that Jack could not easily frame an answer to the doctor's question.

"Did Matt ever feed or clothe you?" asked the doctor.

Jack admitted, with some trifling modifications of the first condition, that Matt had not.

"Did he ever give you a home, or take care of you when you were sick, or pay your school bills?"

Jack shook his head.

"Then why can't you care so much for your mother and me as you do for him?" continued the doctor.

Jack was silent.

"It's because you're an ungrateful young scamp," exclaimed the doctor with considerable temper, as he arose and left the room.

"Father," shouted Jack, "it isn't! Please come back?"

The doctor, considerably startled by such an exhibition of feeling, hastily returned.

"Father," said Jack, turning his head in spite of considerable pain which the motion inflicted upon his arm, "it's because—because Matt's a boy."

"Umph!" exclaimed the doctor, "that is a reason —a wonderful reason. I should think you would want to have it patented, or copyrighted, or something."

The doctor retired, pondering upon human depravity as exemplified by ingratitude, and Jack, having plenty of time, began to devise some way of shaming his father out of so unjust an idea as that his boy was ungrateful. When he became a man and a steamboat captain he would bring all the doc-

tor's medicines free of charge—perhaps that wouldn't heap coals of fire upon the old gentleman's head—oh, no! Indeed, he was not sure but he might one day become a missionary—missionaries must have jolly times on tropical islands where they can always go about in their shirt sleeves, have for nothing all the bananas they can eat, and shoot lions, and birds of paradise, and things, right from their own doors. Perhaps when he sent his father a tiger-skin rug, and his mother a whole lot of ostrich plumes, and a monkey, and some cunning heathen gods to put on her parlor mantel, his father would talk about ingratitude then, but Jack rather guessed not! Then when his mother came in with a plate of water-toast, Jack surprised her by remarking.

"Mother, when marble time comes, I'll give you all the buttons I win."

"What do you mean, Jack?" said the lady.

"Why, we play marbles for buttons sometimes, and there's only two or three boys in town that can beat me, and I never play with them."

"Where do they get the buttons to bet?" asked Mrs. Wittingham, "and," she continued, a dire suspicion coming suddenly to mind, "where do *you* get them?"

"I—I don't know," said Jack feebly, at which answer his mother sniffed alarmingly, and left Jack to feel that grown folks were most shamefully suspicious, and that they couldn't appreciate gratitude when it was offered them.

Two or three days later the fever set in, and Jack dreamed for days of Polar explorations, where he could go swimming in cooling seas and sun himself dry on iridescent icebergs. He planned a wonderful voyage of discovery to the North Pole, and it was of inestimable comfort to him to report progress to Matt, in the five minutes which that youth was allowed daily at the sufferer's bedside. The tenor of his thoughts was daily interrupted by his mother, who considered the occasion demanded Bible reading instead of personal sympathy for the youth, who could not leave his bed to attend family prayers, and she so frequently selected passages descriptive of a locality the temperature of which is the reverse of polar, that Jack had to do a great deal of mental rambling to get his thoughts in proper trim again.

At last the fever subsided leaving Jack extremely weak in body, but of a temper simply angelic. He prefaced every request with "please," he never for-

got to say "thank you," and he sang little hymns softly to himself. Mrs. Wittingham was delighted beyond measure, and when she suggested that the minister might like to call, and Jack replied that it would be very nice to have a chat with that gentleman, the lady became considerably alarmed on the subject of the boy's recovery. Mr. Daybright, the minister, was really a very pleasant man, as Jack discovered, now that he had time to "take his measure," as he himself expressed it, and after Mr. Daybright had talked with him for half an hour, and prayed with him, and departed, Jack did not know but he might finally conclude to be a minister himself, and have cake and cider offered him in the middle of the afternoon when he called upon boys with broken arms.

Then Jack's Sunday-school teacher called, and suggested that the class should come in a body, on the following Sunday, and Jack accepted the suggestion with fervor, and the class came, and stood decorously in a row, and sang several hymns, and looked as sober as if fish-lines and peg-tops and balls and birds' nests and orchards and crooked pins and truancy did not exist anywhere nearer than the planet Neptune. Then the teacher gave Jack a

book from the Sunday-school library, which book he had selected with Jack's particular condition of mind in view, and although it proved to be the story of a dreadfully priggish but very pious little London footman, whose nature, tastes, temptations and general environment were utterly unlike Jack's, the boy labored manfully through it, and endeavored to persuade himself that he enjoyed it.

In fact, so thorough an overhauling did Jack's conscience receive that he even felt himself called upon to confess to the doctor his affair with Hoccamine's whiskey, but although the doctor had heard the story a month before from the lips of Matt's father, he had not yet reached that mental balance which would enable him to reprove the boy and still leave him impressed with a sense of the vileness of the rum traffic, so the doctor said only "Well," in a very grave way, and made an excuse to leave the sick chamber.

A few days later Jack was allowed to sit under the great trees in front of the house, and as he was positively forbidden to leave the grounds, to run, or to make any exertion which might disturb the arm, which he carried in a sling, he fell to noting the habits of birds with their young, until he became so

affected that he silently vowed never to rob a nest again. He found in the flowers and the shrubbery many a charm which he had never suspected when weeding them; he contemplated cloud pictures until an overwhelming sense of the beautiful compelled him to decide upon an artistic career, and he watched every motion of whatever laborer happened to be in sight until he determined that he never again would throw a chip or anything else at a laboring man, no matter how funny he might look or how fluently he could swear when he espied his tormentor.

Finally, to the delight of his parents and many other people who were responsible for boys, but to the general depression of the boys themselves, it became known that Jack had signified his intention of joining the church. Mr. Daybright admitted that in years Jack was rather young to take such a step, but, on the other hand, he had a far abler mind, and—even although he was called the worst boy in town—a cleaner record than half the adults who came into the fold. Mr. Daybright had explained to him, as men often will to boys other than their own, that boys need not stop being boys and being happy just because they become good, so

there was considerable disappointment experienced by such youths as shrewdly imagined that Jack's change of heart would result in his large and varied assortment of knives, lines, marbles, skates, etc., being thrown upon the market at reduced prices. Jack explained, with considerable vigor, that because he was going to give up mischief it did not necessarily follow that he should become a muff, or a soft head, or a twiddler, or an apron string, or a foo-foo, or a stick-in-the-mud, or a dummy, or any other of a dozen or two unpopular varieties of boy which he mentioned, but that he proposed to "keep his shirt on," remain "forked end down," retain possession of his eye-teeth, and have as good a time as anybody else could who didn't have to suffer for it afterward. And the unregenerate boys went away slowly and without the great possessions which they had expected to carry with them, while one of them who was generous as well as shrewd was heard to say that bully old Jack Wittingham wasn't going to flunk out after all, and that a fellow could do many a worse thing than to join the church.

CHAPTER VII.

"When the devil was well,
The devil a saint was he."

JACK sat, one evening, on a horse-block just outside the front gate, contemplating the evening star and such of its companions as were putting in their respective appearances. He was attired rather more carefully than was considered necessary for a Doveton boy on any day but Sunday, and his countenance was in keeping with his garb, while his hair was brushed to a degree of smoothness almost dandyish. Suddenly one-half of the Pinkshaw twins approached and asked Jack if he didn't feel like going that night to a meeting to be held by the German Methodists, who were holding a series of week-day evening services.

"I can't," said Jack. "We're expecting—expecting a visitor, and I must stay home to meet him."

"That's too bad," said the half of the Pinkshaw twins, scraping the dust into a heap with his bare feet, "for they've got old Vater Offenstein, all the

way from New Munich, to do the exhorting, and they expect a great time."

"They are real good people, those German Methodists are," said Jack, "but you'll have to excuse me to-night. Get some other fellow to go with you."

"I can't," explained young Pinkshaw. "Nearly all the boys are going to a party at Billy Barker's sister's, but Billy and I don't speak since he traded me a dog that was given to fits, so I'm not going."

Jack sympathized with the Pinkshaw twin in his loneliness; besides, he did not know but some feeling stronger than mere curiosity was drawing the boy toward the church; certainly he, Jack, would never have divulged a religious feeling in any but a roundabout way. The church was but a five minutes' walk, and he could excuse himself and come away after the Pinkshaw twin became fairly interested. So he accompanied the boy, their direction being toward the sound of some very spirited singing, which could be distinctly heard above all other evening sounds. Arrived at the little church, Jack found that his companion would not have lacked congenial society even had he come alone, for in the back seats were already congregated several

boys of respectable parentage, and a loafer or two besides, as well as half a dozen adults who frequently occupied back seats in churches. Jack would have retired at once, but the famous Vater Offenstein had just ascended the pulpit, removed his coat, laid it across the desk and opened the Bible, and Jack, who was just then full of sympathy with all believers of the Word, was anxious to observe the old man's method.

The service began with an earnest prayer, to which responses were offered from most of the benches near the altar. Then a rich old German choral was finely rendered, after which Vater Offenstein proceeded to business. Jack understood a little of the exhortation, having studied German, and he ventured a silent prayer that its whole meaning might be taken in by Sam Mugley, the sadler shop apprentice, who understood German and all the ways of the evil one beside. The discourse was apparently a powerful one, for "Amen!" "Gott macht es!" "Liebes Herr und Heiland!" and various other responses escaped frequently from the faithful. Old Nokkerman, man-of-all-work at Matt Bolton's father's store, seemed particularly excited; he waved to and fro on his seat, his shock

of long uncombed hair with a bald spot in its centre making him particularly noticeable. The old man's cranium did not, however, attract attention only from admirers of the picturesque, for suddenly a small but rapid ball of soft-chewed paper made a fair bull's eye on the circle of bare scalp, and flattened itself over considerable space. Old Nokkerman turned speedily to perceive only several rows of solemn-faced unregenerates, Jack's eye being the only one he could catch, so he shook his fist warningly at the general line of occupants of the back seats, and then resumed his blissful manifestations as quickly as if the religious ecstacy were a mere habit which could be assumed or laid aside at will. A hurried interchange of views took place in a whisper on the furthest seat back, with the result that Sam Mugley, the sadler shop apprentice, slyly drew a small tin putty-blower from an inner breast pocket, and aimed a ball of putty at old Nokkerman's cranial target. The shot missed its mark, being low and to one side, and struck Fritz Shantz a smart blow in the back of his neck. As Shantz was a butcher as well as a devout Methodist, he rose instantly with blood in his eye, and started for the back of the church, his mien being

so terrible that one of the more cautious of the loafers hurried out of church and took to his heels, thus diverting suspicion from the guilty person, and laying up for himself a day of wrath which Shantz determined should not be long postponed.

Jack was really in sympathy with the worshippers, and was also indignant, with them, at the godless disturbers of the excellent tone of the meeting, but it was out of the power of any healthy boy with a keen sense of the ridiculous to avoid a little laughter at the peculiar ways of old Nokkerman and the butcher under their annoyances. And a little laughter in a boy of fourteen is quite likely to be something like the beginning of strife; it led to more and yet more, until Jack was too full to restrain his merriment, and it bubbled out of his eyes and all over his face. The brethren knew by experience that when disturbances began so early in the evening, the occasion demanded sharp eyes and prompt action, so several of the occupants of the "Amen" seats kept a pretty steady sidelong glance at the back benches, while one brother walked quietly out of church and notified a constable that trouble was expected.

Meanwhile, Vater Offenstein continued his ex-

hortations, alternating between heavenly love and the brimstone of the unpopular extreme of the debatable land, and the excitable among the brethren and sisters responded more and more fervently, and Gottlieb Wiffterschneck sprang to his feet and jumped up and down shouting, "Ach, Herr Jesu!" when the horse doctor's boy, who had been biding his time outside the church just under one of the windows, carefully trained a huge syringe to bear upon the altar, and deluged Vater Offenstein's face with water, which, like the precious oil upon the head of Aaron, ran down upon his beard and garments, and shed considerable upon the Holy Book beside. This was too much for even good Vater Offenstein, so instead of repeating the sublime prayer of the dying Stephen he picked up a small wooden bench upon which short preachers usually knelt in the pulpit, and hurled it at the window, missing the open space and sending it through two panes of glass and the intervening sash. This provoked a laugh even from one or two of the faithful, so the occupants of the back benches released themselves from all restraint, and laughed aloud in a most unseemly manner, while Vater Offenstein wiped his face and hair with his coat, and quoted

appropriate passages of Scripture most dreadfully between his teeth, translating some of them into English for the benefit of the race from which alone the annoyances of the brethren proceeded. A general quiet being thereby induced, the exhortation was resumed for a short time, and ended in an invitation to the penitent to go forward to the altar and be prayed for.

While the brethren sang a hymn, several sinners passed up the narrow aisle and Jack turned his head with the hope that he might see Sam Mugley, the saddler shop apprentice, join the band, but the wicked Sam was just in the act of blowing a second putty-ball, and Jack's head coming suddenly in range as it turned, the ball struck Jack fairly in one eye, causing the boy to emit a howl of anguish. In an instant Shantz the butcher had collared Jack and shaken him soundly, exclaiming,

"Dat iss vat a gute Amerigan boy iss, iss it?

"Somebody hit me in the eye with something," screamed Jack, "and it hurts awfully. *Oh!*"

"Den dat iss too bad," said Shantz. "Dell me who it vass and I will break effery bone in hiss body."

But Jack could not tell, and several sympathizing

brethren gathered about him and suggested that he should take a seat farther forward, and be where the bad boys could not annoy him. Although this suggestion, thanks to the mysterious ways of the unfathomable German mind, was equivalent to asking him to put himself more directly under fire, Jack gladly availed himself of it, so as to remove himself from an environment which was full of cause for suspicion.

By this time the assemblage was on its knees, listening to a prayer by Petrus von Schlenker. Petrus' prayer was very earnest, but it was also long; it was delivered with such rapidity that Jack could not understand a word of it, so the exercise became rather monotonous to him, and he opened his eyes and looked about. Under the single slat which formed the back of the bench, and directly in front of him, Jack beheld the broad and well-patched trowsers-seat of Nuderkopf Trinkelspiel, and Satan, who long ago became noted for putting in an appearance when the Sons of God were in council (See Job, Chap. I), suggested to Jack that through such a mass of patches a bent pin might work its way for quite a distance without doing any serious damage to the wearer. Jack broke an an-

ticipatory laugh square in two, and closed his eyes in prayer to be delivered from temptation, but when he opened his eyes again there were the patches, apparently a little more inviting than before. Jack did not exactly wish that some good brother on the bench behind Nuderkopf Trinkelspiel would think to crook a pin and place it on Nuderkopf's bench just as the latter arose to take his seat, but he wished, in case anyone *should* be prompted to do such a thing, that he, Jack, might have his head turned just then so as to observe the result of the operation. And still Petrus von Schlenker's prayer went on, and Jack's eyes remained open, and the boy was glad that he did not occupy the seat behind Nuderkopf Trinkelspiel, lest he might be tempted. Suddenly there came to Jack something which would have been called an inspiration had its tendency been different. He remembered that he had a pin in the lapel of his own jacket, and it occurred to him that this pin might be bent so as to have a reliable base, and the point might be inserted in the seat of Nuderkopf Trinkelspiel's trowsers, where it would be in position to attend to business as soon as the worshippers resumed a sitting posture. Jack promptly whispered

to himself "Get thee behind me, Satan," suiting the action to the word by removing the pin from the coat and dropping it on the floor. But there it was more tempting than it had been before; it lay there, bright, thick and strong, demanding that Jack should look at it. It was no common, soft pin, to collapse at the first sign of pressure, but tough enough to serve as a nail, if occasion required. Jack was really curious to know if so unprecedented an application of a pin could be successful, because, if he became a preacher, as he instantly resolved he would, he might some time preach in German in that very church, and then if such a trick were served upon any one, he would be able to detect the guilty person. Besides, the patch seemed to repose upon other patches, and probably the pin point could not more than pierce the cloth itself, where it would be when Nuderkopf Trinkelspiel knelt at the next prayer, and it would demonstrate what would be the effect of a similar operation upon a thinner pair of trowsers.

Jack picked up the pin and bent it with the greatest care, though it would have seemed to an exact scientist that the upright portion was unnecessarily long for a purpose merely experimental. He in-

serted it with the greatest nicety between the coarse threads of the homespun patch, and though he admitted that Petrus von Schlenker was considered a very good man, he determined that his prayer was too long to be efficacious. Suddenly the voluble Petrus said "Amen," the audience arose, Jack's heart bounced into his mouth, Nuderkopf Trinkelspiel began to sit down, the brethren started the noble choral beginning

"Groser Gott wir loben dich;
Herr, wir preisen deiner stärke,"

when suddenly Nuderkopf Trinkelspiel emitted a most appalling yell, and followed it up with so many others of a similar character, that the song sank to a faltering termination, and the singers crowded around their disturber, scarcely knowing whether to attribute the disturbance to pain or to grace. Several minutes elapsed before Nuderkopf Trinkelspiel sought the cause of his agony, but when at length he extracted the pin from the seat of his trowsers and held it aloft in explanation, no one failed to comprehend the cause of his agitation. Then astonishment gave place to mystery, for it passed conjecture how the pin could even have got upon the bench, with several reliable brethren just behind Nuderkopf

and one at either side of him. During the general arising, Jack considered it safer to start homeward to see the company that had been expected early in the evening, but he lingered outside the window just a moment, to see the excitement subside, and great was his mirth as he beheld the wondering faces of the honest Germans. Here he was joined by the Pinkshaw twin and two or three other boys, but just then Vater Offenstein reminded the congregation that time was rapidly bearing them on to eternity, so the brethren resumed their seats, and Jack was going to start for home when the Pinkshaw twin asked, perhaps forgetting Jack's new professions,

"What next?"

Lazy George Crayton remarked that he had brought some torpedoes which he had saved over from the fourth of July, but none of them had exploded when he threw them, perhaps because in the church he could not get good elbow-room when he threw.

Jack had determined not to make any more trouble, but if there was anything which he despised above all others, it was a person who could never think of but one way to do a thing. So he reproached George Crayton with being a dunderhead,

and George replied that if somebody was smarter than somebody else, perhaps somebody would have the kindness to show how. So Jack thought carefully for a moment or two, and then asked if anyone had an old letter in his pocket. Nobody answered in the affirmative, but as Jack said that any stout sheet of paper a foot long would do, a boy who lived near by sped homeward, and soon returned with a sheet of foolscap. Jack rolled this into a tube, put several torpedoes into it, put his lips to one end by way of illustration, and remarked

"There!"

"I'll bet you can't blow them hard enough to snap," whispered the lazy George in reply.

Such an aspersion of the power of his lungs was too much for Jack's principles, so he peered cautiously about the church for an appropriate mark. Vater Offenstein was the most prominent and tempting one in sight, but him Jack regarded almost as the Lord's anointed. On either side of the pulpit, however, were large oil lamps, and inviting attention to the one which was nearest, Jack took deliberate aim and blew a mighty blast. He missed the lamp, but the wall behind the pulpit was hard enough to stop any small projectile, and against

this the torpedoes crashed almost as a single one, and caused Vater Offenstein to jump nearly across the pulpit. Half a dozen of the faithful hurried out of doors, and after them, to see the fun, dashed all the occupants of the back seats, while from some unknown hiding place sprang the constable. Away flew the boys, all in the same direction, and after them went the constable, the brethren and the whole body of the scoffers. Jack and the Pinkshaw twin easily got away from their pursuers and found friendly cover in the darkness, but a confused sound of harsh voices, dominated by a loud wail, indicated that lazy George Crayton had been caught.

"Oh, oh, oh," exclaimed Jack in a hoarse whisper, "isn't it too dreadful?"

"Never mind," said the Pinkshaw twin, reassuringly, "they haven't got *us*."

"They *will* get us, though," said Jack. "That George Crayton will tell on us—he's an awful coward when he gets cornered. What shall I do?"

"Lick him," suggested the Pinkshaw twin; "lick him until he'll be afraid to say his soul's his own the next time he gets into a scrape."

"That isn't it," said Jack. "The thing will get all over town, and all this time I ought to have been

at home to see Mr. Daybright, who was to come to our house to-night for the express purpose of examining me on my evidences!"

The Pinkshaw twin had nothing to say in reply to this information, and Jack sneaked home and hung about the doorway until he assured himself that Mr. Daybright had gone; then he made some lame excuse for his absence and retired to a very uneasy pillow.

CHAPTER VIII.

FUGITIVES FROM JUSTICE.

ON the next morning there was a marked scarcity of boys in places where, at ordinary times, boys most did congregate. The scamps who had scrambled about the edge of sacrilege on the preceding night, kept themselves carefully secluded from the general gaze, while other mischievous boys, having learned by sad experience that suspicion, like lightning, is much given to striking at objects that do not merit any such attention, devoted themselves industriously to home affairs, or went upon solitary journeys into the suburbs.

And these precautionary measures proved to be not without sense, for at a tolerably early hour the Post Office, which was also the office of the most popular of the two local justices of the peace, was approached by a strong delegation from the outraged Society of German Methodists. First came the renowned Vater Offenstein, supported by the

Reverend Schnabel Mauterbach, pastor of the church. Vater Offenstein had not been able to keep his hair and clothing wet during the hot August night, but the water thrown from the syringe had not been very clean, so there were great stains upon the cotton shirt which its wearer would swear had been put on clean on the day of the service. The pastor bore the soiled and still damp copy of the Holy Book. Then came old Nokkerman, his hair carefully combed and soaped down, so that the justice might plainly see the bald spot which had been used as a target. Beside old Nokkerman walked Shantz the butcher, with his coat off, so that he might display the great red spot where the putty-ball had struck him. After them walked Petrus von Schlenker, to offer an affidavit that he had prayed during the service, though anyone who knew the gifts of the tongue of Petrus would have accepted a mere statement on that point as conclusive. Beside Petrus waddled Nuderkopf Trinkelspiel, jealously guarding in an empty paint can the bent pin which had caused him to disturb the meeting; he also bore, in their normal position, the well-patched trowsers through which the point of the pin had found its way.

Then came the sexton of the church, carrying

under one arm the bench which Vater Offenstein had hurled at Satan's representative; in another hand he carried the broken glass and sash wrapped in two thicknesses of newspaper, and in his pocket was a match-box containing the papers and such other fragments as could be collected of the offending torpedoes. A number of witnesses followed, so that the postmaster-justice's little office was completely filled. Then the pastor announced that the party had called to make and substantiate a complaint, and various statements were volunteered before the justice could impress the assemblage with the necessity for administering oaths. Vater Offenstein, immediately upon being sworn, opened his coat, displayed his soiled shirt, and impressively held the Good Book aloft, opened at its stained, wet pages. Shantz the butcher delivered his own sworn statement with his face to the wall, the impressiveness of the proceeding being somewhat abated by his completely covering with his immense forefinger the red spot on the back of his neck; old Nokkerman bent nearly double so as to display his baldness as he talked; Petrus von Schlenker talked volubly to no purpose until cut short by the justice, and Nuderkopf Trinkelspiel,

trying at the same time to hold aloft the torturing pin, look the justice impressively in the eye, and yet display the seat of offending beneath his upraised coat-tail, presented a figure which utterly destroyed judicial gravity. Then the sexton laid upon the table the little bench which Vater Offenstein had cast from the pulpit, and carefully unrolled the broken glass and sash, and brought up from the depth of his pocket the little but positive proof in the shape of fragments of torpedoes. Then the constable brought in lazy George Crayton, who had spent the night in the town jail, and who looked as pallid and guilty as if he had to answer for the crime of murdering a whole family.

George did not waive an examination; on the contrary, he had such a passion for confession that he included, in his list of accomplices, the name of every boy in town against whom he had any grudge whatever, and it was not until after the examination that it occurred to him that he personally had done nothing whatever to disturb the meeting. Then George's father gave bonds that his son should keep the peace, after which he led the youth home to the pain which follows discipline. Shantz the butcher

turned up his shirt collar, the pastor and Vater Offenstein departed with the sacred Book, the sexton carried the pulpit bench back to its legitimate position. Old Nokkerman tried to scratch his head, but discovered, as his fingers slid impotently over the soaped locks, that the ends of justice are sometimes attained only through extra annoyance to the offended; Petrus von Schlenker, who had been slowly realizing that he had sustained no personal grievance, made the best of his time by engaging the justice on local politics; Nuderkopf Trinkelspiel carefully secured the offending pin, and the constable went in search of the yet unapprehended offenders.

Meanwhile, the innocent half of the Pinkshaw twins, who had been listening outside the window, had heard the list of the offenders pronounced by the justice as he wrote the warrant, and discovered to his horror that his own name was included therein, the informer having been uncertain as to which Pinkshaw twin was present. An inborn sense of equity suggested to him the application of the principle of an alibi, but later he realized that to be innocent yet suspected, would justify him in escaping the hated French class, and yet save him from the

ordinary penalty of truancy. Away he sped to notify the whole list, and within half an hour nearly all the boys whose names were upon the warrant were informed of their legal status, while the constable, who fully realized how much work was before him, had barely finished strengthening himself at Gripp's rumshop.

The first man notified was Jack, and as that youth had an utter abhorrence of loneliness he suggested to the Pinkshaw twin that he should name the Dead House blackberry patch as a safe place of rendezvous, inasmuch as nobody would be likely to go there, the blackberry season being over, there being no contagious disease raging in town, and the house being off the road to any where. He also suggested that the boys should bring with them whatever provisions they could lay hands upon. Then Jack, with his heart in his stockings, and his eyes feeling ready to overflow, made haste to collect a hatchet, a box of matches, his fishing tackle and whatever else he could think of, in his haste, as likely to mitigate the privations of exile. Great as his haste was, he found time to hide in the corncrib for a moment or two, kneel devoutly, and inform the Lord that he hadn't meant to do anything

wrong, and that he hoped when next there was a scrape impending, the Lord would send an angel to forcibly drive Jack from the scene of action. More mature sinners, as they smile pityingly at this style of repentance, would do well to examine their own business consciences, and restrain their smiles until they ascertain whether they have not themselves indulged in many a similar *ex post facto* operation.

Arrived at the Dead House blackberry patch, Jack found quite an assortment of solemn-faced boys under the shady side of the high board fence. All of the guilty parties were there, except Sam Mugley, the saddler shop apprentice, whose employer had agreed to surrender the boy when necessary; there were also present many boys who preferred to flee the evils which they knew—to wit, French paradigms—than endure those they knew not of. Several boys immediately demanded of Jack what was to be done, and while the interrogated youth retired within himself to devise a plan of action, Ben Bagger, who read all the popular literature for boys, suggested that they should organize under the title of "The Bloody Land Pirates," and prey upon the society which had un-

justly cast them out, but this suggestion was severely damaged by Jack, who said that the duty of the hour was to see that things were made no worse. Then Jack decreed that the party should retain its present quarters, separating if it chose, at nightfall, to slumber in neighboring barns, fishing at dawn and after sunset, and diverting itself by whatever means were available, until a general amnesty could be procured.

For an hour or two the group amused itself with conversation, the guilty Pinkshaw twin causing considerable merriment by a recital of the experiences of the righteous Germans on the preceding night. Jack endeavored to withdraw himself from the Pinkshaw twin's audience, but who does not enjoy retrospects of affairs which in themselves were enjoyable? So he lingered, afar off, yet within sound of the Pinkshaw twin's voice until that youth alluded to Jack having taken a seat among the pious, and then Jack, like the cowardly apostle Peter, began to curse and to swear. The ways of Peter came to his mind, both reproachingly and in comfort, for he remembered that Peter had behaved valiantly after discovering what a blatant, white-livered sort of a fellow he was, and Jack, to stifle

his conscience, was willing for the moment to believe that if he himself swore, lied and put in a general denial, the evil might be excusable for the sake of the good it might bring. In this respect he so much resembled many an unscrupulous wire-puller in church affairs that no theological partizan can fail to sympathize with him.

After the story of the German Methodist meeting had concluded, conversation languished, and several boys complained of hunger. Jack took charge of the commissariat and having carefully garnered all the provisions that had been brought, he suggested to those who were guiltless (except of truancy) that if they would go boldly to the justice, claim to have been at Billy Barker's sister's party at the time of the outrage, and offer Billy, his sister and his mother in evidence, they would, without doubt, be cleared. When these boys had reluctantly departed, the assemblage was reduced to five boys, three of whom had done nothing worse than laugh at the capers which had been played upon the faithful, Jack and the Pinkshaw twin, who pleaded guilty of having thrown the spitball at old Nokkerman's bare scalp, constituting the remainder.

How these were to pass the time until night was

a serious problem, when one of the innocent, who was also a loafer, produced a grimy pack of cards, and therewith he soon won all the fractional currency in possession of his companions; then he departed, having doubly avenged himself upon fate by dining heartily upon the stores of the exiles. Of the quartette which remained, Jack was outwardly the most cheerful and careless, but inwardly—well, he could not help thinking of the Spartan boy who allowed a fox to prey upon his vitals while he was denying any knowledge even of the existence of a fox anywhere nearer than the Apennines. Ruling in hell might have its social advantages over serving in heaven, but in whatever location a man may be, there will the appropriate mental temperature be also. Jack's remorse was genuine and terrible, and he admitted to himself that he would gladly make any reparation, endure any obloquy, suffer any punishment, in fact, go through anything that could be devised—except being caught by the constable.

When supper time came and went, it was discovered that the larder would be empty in the morning, but fortunately Matt appeared, coming at night, like Nicodemus, for fear of the authorities,

and brought with him a whole loaf of bread and fifty or sixty cubic inches of boiled ham. But the boys slept out of doors that night, and awoke with such appetites that the bread and ham disappeared and they were still hungry. Then they stole many ears of scarcely ripe green corn, which they roasted and ate for dinner without successfully filling their respective aching voids. A raid was made upon a patch of early potatoes, but these did not roast satisfactorily, as any of the boys might have known had they ever tried an early potato before. The final result was that the boys slept supperless, and were at the mill-dam before daylight, where they were successful in demonstrating to certain occupants of the water that catching the early worm is not an unmixed blessing. But even fish, broiled on sticks or fried on a heated plowshare which somebody had stolen, are not particularly palatable when eaten without salt or bread. So the party finally sneaked toward town with hungry faces, vigilant eyes, and waistbands which would lap past their accustomed meeting place, and fasten, without extra tugging, at the first suspender button.

Meanwhile, the constable had been prowling industriously about the town, stimulated beyond

average official enthusiasm by the offer of a ten-dollar bill from the German Methodist treasury, for the apprehension of all the culprits. He had examined the innocent boys with the result of determining that the juvenile mind is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. He had been to the mill-dam only to discover traces of early work by workers who, like the Arabs, had "silently stolen away;" he had watched under the windows of him

> "——— Who returneth,
> Whose chamber lamp burneth
> No more,———"

He had examined the cock-loft of the school, ridden along the river-bank, sneaked beside the fences of popular orchards, and lain in ambush near brush-heaps where laying hens most did congregate. He had even tracked, to unprofitable localities, various boys whom he suspected of conveying aid and comfort to the enemy, and all he could show for his pains was a badly sunburned nose, and a pair of boots considerably damaged by brush-wood and concealed stumps.

At noon, on the third day, he was completely exhausted, and determined that if ever a good

watermelon could supply a pleasing finale to a noon-day meal, it was then. So he walked out to his own melon-patch, chuckling, as he went, over the strict seclusion of the same, for it occupied the centre of a hollow square, the sides of which consisted of dense rows of tall corn. As he approached this from his own back door, he perceived how vain is the cunning of man when confronted by the intuition of the bad boy; for there —at ease, and enjoying the particularly large melon which he had been reserving against a day when upon his wife might accidentally be inflicted a deluge of company—sat the boys for whom he had been looking.

The constable roared "Halt!" but with no more success than if he were an army officer in the midst of a panic, for the boys separated in the corn rows, and the official was undecided as to which to follow. So, indulging to an injudicious extent in that profanity which so naturally attends indecision and failure, he strove gloomily to the foot of his garden to discover, to his great delight, that Jack had stumbled, fallen and knocked all the breath out of his body without seeming able to regain enough for practical purposes. In an instant Jack was in the

THE STRONG ARM OF THE LAW.

official's arms, and though he bit, scratched, kicked and begged, he was speedily invested in a pair of handcuffs in the constable's dining-room, and afterward led slowly through the main street to the town jail.

CHAPTER IX.

THE STOOL OF REPENTANCE.

IT was customary in Doveton to put sober offenders against the peace in the second floor rooms of the jail, for these, though not containing everything that a fastidious taste might desire, were well lighted and ventilated. But as the constable led Jack to jail, he thought upon his own despoiled melon patch, so he decided to put the young man into the dungeon which was reserved for the most depraved disturbers and desperate villains. As Jack was pushed into this receptacle he noticed, with a sinking of the heart, that the door was a foot thick, built of most chilling oak-tree hearts, and strapped with huge bars of iron. Not that he had contemplated escape; he was just then too feeble of soul to contemplate anything but his own iniquity; but he had the natural, healthful objection to restraint, and when restraint can be measured by the cubic foot it is depressing

almost to idiocy. Then the constable shot four massive bolts, each one of which seemed to give Jack's heart a mighty thump as it grated and groaned into its proper place. Jack turned to look at the window. It was of rough glass, so that a prisoner could not look out; it was only six inches high, though its length was about two feet, and it was crossed both inside and outside by stout bars of iron let into the stone. The furniture, when Jack's eyes became sufficiently accustomed to the dim light to see it all, consisted of a dingy cot of canvas and a broken pitcher containing the water left by the cell's last occupant, who had gone to the state prison two months before for passing counterfeit money. The only decorations were some cobwebs, which in tone harmonized with the general effect of the interior, and an engraving, upon the stone of the lightest side of the cell, of a frightful looking being with horns, hoof and barbed tail, having beneath it the inscription, "ThE DEViL Taik Evry boDDy." The odor of the apartment was undesirable.

By the time Jack had learned this much, he threw himself upon the canvas cot, careless of what else there might be to observe, and sobbed vio-

lently. This, then, was the end of the boy who had been so good for a month, who was going to join the church and be useful in persuading other boys out of bad courses, and be a missionary, perhaps, and a minister at the very least! Everybody now would think him a hypocrite; he would probably be sent to the penitentiary for a year or two, for now that the proper occasion for recalling the fact had passed, he remembered to have heard that disturbing religious assemblages was a great crime in the eyes of the law. Perhaps they would send him to the reform school, which would be a thousand times worse than the penitentiary, for the word "reform" suggested as dreadful possibilities to Jack as it ever did to a self-made politician. When he came out again what would happen to him? He had never seen any persons but loafers pay any attention to discharged prisoners who made Doveton their abiding place. Nobody would let their boys play with him then—if, indeed, by that time he had enough youth and spirits left to want to play; he would have to sit on the back seats in church among the sad-eyed, uninteresting reprobates who now sat there, instead of among the neatly dressed boys who sat under the eyes of their parents and the preacher.

Then Jack thought of the hereafter, in the literal, material manner, which was the natural result of the religious teachings he had received. If angels knew everything and went wherever they pleased, and if his deceased brothers and sisters became angels just after they died—they had been angelic while they lived—how must they feel to see their well-born, carefully taught brother in so dreadful a place as a common prison? As Jack thought of it he wished the prison bed had a cover under which he could hide; but as it had not, he squeezed his face and flattened his nose upon the rough, dirty canvas. The thought of his parents recalled the wish, frequently felt by Jack, that somebody would understand him, know how earnestly he longed to be good—some one to whom he could tell some of the splendid thoughts he sometimes had—thoughts which would simply astonish his parents out of their senses, if he could feel free to tell them. Why didn't people give him credit for what was in him, instead of eternally finding fault with him for what came out of him? Was he a jug that he should be judged in such a manner? Looking the matter squarely in the face, however, how was any one to know what was inside of him except by what proceeded from him?

This train of reasoning was promptly dismissed as unpleasant in the extreme, and Jack began to search his pockets for something that might assist him in consuming time more endurably, when some one at the grating in the door startled him by exclaiming:

"Well, young man!"

Jack recognized the voice of his father, and his heart went down, down, down, apparently through the floor, and all the way into the depths of the middle of the western half of the Pacific Ocean, which, by careful investigation, Jack had determined was the geographical antipode of Doveton. Then the door opened, and Jack's father entered, and, oh, horror of horrors! he brought with him Mr. Daybright, the minister. Jack sat upon the side of the cot and nervelessly dropped his face into his hands and his elbows upon his knees.

"Well, young man," resumed the doctor, "what have you got to say for yourself?"

Jack preserved utter silence, but determined that he never before heard so exasperating a question.

"My poor boy," said Mr. Daybright, sitting down beside Jack and putting his arm around him, "Sa-

tan has indeed been making a mighty fight to secure your immortal part."

"I think so too," sobbed Jack, glad of a chance to lay the blame of his mischievousness upon somebody else, and determining that if he ever *did* become a minister, he would make things lively for Matt Bolton's father, who denied the existence of a personal devil.

"So think I," remarked the doctor, "and a very successful job Satan has made of it. I wish he would give me a few lessons in the art of getting hold of boys."

The minister thought to himself that it was not necessary for the doctor to go so far for information when he could have obtained it from present company, but as the doctor paid a large pew rent in Mr. Daybright's church, that divine thought it inadvisable to offend a person upon whom a portion of his own salary depended. But he could safely say what he chose to Jack, so he said:

"Rouse yourself, my dear young friend; you still live and move and have your being, and

> While the lamp holds out to burn
> The vilest sinner may return,'

you know. Why not, in this unsavory place, eschew finally and forever all bad associations?"

"I will—oh, I will!" cried Jack.

"I've heard something of the sort before," remarked the doctor. "I've heard it from this young scamp himself, and, Mr. Daybright, you and I have often heard it from men who thought they were upon their death-beds."

"Blessed be death-beds, then," fervently exclaimed the minister. "Jack, why don't you determine to say, hereafter and always, 'Get thee behind me, Satan!' when wrong impulses make themselves known in your mind?"

"I have done it," said Jack, recalling his experience with the pin in the German Methodist meeting, "but it don't take him long to get around in front of me again."

The doctor hid an unseemly giggle in his handkerchief, and the minister himself was temporarily silenced; then the doctor managed to straighten out his voice, as he said:

"Listen to me, my boy. I can take you out of this vile hole, but only by subscribing a hundred dollars to the debt of the German Methodist church, repairing their broken window, giving them a new Bible, changing my custom from the market to Shantz the butcher, who doesn't sell the best of

meat but does charge the highest prices, asking Bolton to raise the salary of old Nokkerman, reducing the amount of my bill to Petrus von Schlenker"—

"I didn't do anything to any of these people," interrupted Jack.

"Whether you did or not," said the doctor, "doesn't affect the case. You did something, whatever it was, to disturb that meeting; those men were all there, they are all among the complainants, and must be satisfied in order to persuade them to withdraw their complaint."

"Didn't—didn't Nuderkopf Trinkelspiel want anything?" asked Jack falteringly.

"Oh!" exclaimed the doctor, "it *was* you who made him sit upon that crooked pin, was it? How did you do it?"

Jack, finding himself trapped by his own words, meekly explained the operation which led to Nuderkopf's spasmodic loquacity, both visitors holding their mouths as he did so. Then the doctor resumed the disturbed line of the conversation by asking:

"What do you propose to do?"

"Oh!" said Jack, raising his head, "I'll be a minister, and preach to bad boys all my life, if you will

only get me out of here, and send me off to some seminary where nobody knows me."

"Umph!" grunted the doctor. "And what sort of a living do you suppose you'll earn in that business?"

"'Quench not the Spirit,'" quoted the minister, and the doctor inwardly acknowledged the justice of the rebuke, though he hypocritically remarked that he had spoken thus only to test Jack's sincerity.

"Will you let other boys alone—keep away from them entirely?" asked the doctor.

This was severer than Jack had anticipated, even when in the depths of contrition and apprehension, so he dropped his head again, and realized anew what a dreadful thing sin was when one came to look it fairly in the face.

"Do you hear me?" asked the doctor.

"All but Matt, father," said Jack. "He never does anything wrong, unless I put him up to it, and I'll promise never to tell him any good thing again, if you'll let me go with him."

"Good thing!" ejaculated the doctor. "What sort of repentance do you call that, dominie, when outrageous capers are characterized as good things?"

The minister shook his head gravely, and answered:

"My dear young friend, you must realize that what you call good things are really bad things. Until you fully understand this, there is nothing to prevent your getting into just such trouble again."

"Then I'll call everything bad," said Jack; "blackberrying, fishing, answers to hard sums,——"

"Gently, boy," said the minister. "None of these things do harm to any one."

"I supposed they did," cried Jack, "for I like them all, and it seems as if whatever I like is bad."

"Not at all," said the minister, while the doctor hastily drew forth his notebook and made the following note for the great work on heredity: "When a person is suffering, he is liable to believe that things have always been as they are at that particular moment; hence the unhealthy poems, novels and dramas which certain disordered minds spring upon the public." Then the doctor replaced his notebook, contemplated the weeping boy for a moment or two, sat down beside him, put his arms around him, and exclaimed:

"My darling boy, I love you better than I love

my life." The doctor lied terribly, as most busy people do who affirm strong, unselfish sentiments, but Jack was not in a condition just then to question the character of any one who cared to befriend him, so he hid his face in his father's breast and cried as if he could not stop. He even threw his own arms about the doctor with a mighty grip, considering how young the boy was.

"Think of your mother, too," pleaded the doctor. "She has suffered more for you than you ever can for yourself, and she is dreadfully feeble and nervous; *do* try to lighten the load which at best must be very heavy to her."

"I will," said Jack; "indeed I will. I'll darn all my own stockings."

"And," said the minister, who wished all things done decently and in order as established by Providence, "pray daily for grace to overcome every sin."

"I always do," said Jack, "but it don't always work."

"It never will," said the minster, "if you don't act as if your prayer was in earnest. No amount of praying will keep you out of a mud-puddle if you persist in wanting to go into it."

"Well, come along," remarked the doctor, who

had consulted his watch, and remembered a patient who expected a call just then. The door opened, and the trio stepped into the hall; just then there came along a zephyr which had passed a kitchen where onions were being boiled, but for all that, Jack thought it the most delicious breeze that ever blew. The constable, who stood outside the door gave Jack a most discomposing scowl which was not entirely disconnected with remembrances of water melons, but Jack, instead of repaying the scowl in kind, which he could have done with entire success from his own incomparable collection of faces, inwardly determined that at some appropriate time he would privately apologize to the official and repay his water melon in kind. As his father and the minister turned toward the main street, Jack exhibited strong manifestations of reluctance, so both gentlemen concluded it would be only merciful to lead the boy homeward through less frequented streets. But it seemed to Jack as if the whole town had known of his impending release, and were lying in wait to look at him. Shantz the butcher drove by and glared at him; old Nokkerman, *en route* for supper, looked upon him reproachfully; Nuderkopf Trinkelspiel, who was mixing mortar in front of a

new building, contemplated him with the stony stare which is not peculiar to cockneys only, and Matt himself went by without bestowing even a friendly wink upon him.

Worst of all, as the trio passed Billy Barker's house, the nice little sister of Billy happened to step outside the door. Jack dropped his eyes ever so far, but he could not resist looking out of their extreme corners to see what she might think of him. The face which he saw contained considerable wonder, but it also expressed a sorrow which was unmixed with reprobation, and by the time that Jack reached home he was brimful of a feeling to which he had hitherto been an utter stranger. It was not love, as that sentiment is conventionally defined, for it was entirely devoid of passion and selfishness, but it is not surprising that Jack, having never heard love talked of but in one way—to wit, a strong regard for one person by another person of the opposite sex—should go home with the firm conviction that he was oceans deep in love with nice little Mattie Barker. To get a kind look from a person of whom you have never heard anything bad, a person who never scolded you, nor meddled with any of your affairs, and in whose face you can see no

evidence of guile, will doubtless cause *you*, adult reader, to contemplate such person with earnest regard, and if you are a man and the person alluded to is of the other sex, you will hardly be able, even in the light of your past experience among humanity, to imagine any reason why she may not be an angel in human form.

CHAPTER X.

YOUNG AMERICA IN POLITICS.

FOR a month Jack labored manfully to keep his pledge to eschew the society of boys, and a very miserable month it was. He at first determined to not even answer any boy who spoke to him, but this led to his being called "Proudy," and "Codfish," and "Bloated Aristocrat." All this was very galling to a youth who considered himself as preeminently a man of the people. Then, one day, as he was hoeing potatoes in the family garden, half a dozen boys leaned on the fence for an hour, and shouted themselves hoarse by exclaiming in concert, "Tombstone!" To hold one's tongue, as Jack did throughout the infliction, is to prove one's self a possessor of a high degree of self-control. When, however, the half dozen boys grew angry at their inability to elicit any response, and began to throw stones at the young gardener, Jack's endurance escaped him suddenly and he dashed at

the fence, hoe in hand. All the boys fled except one who, being a rowdy, had hugged one of the palings in the affectionate manner peculiar to rowdies, and had unconsciously established an entangling alliance between the paling and a hole in his shirt. Him, Jack pounded over the head with the hoe handle until utter breathlessness compelled the operator to discontinue his labors; then Jack cut him loose with his pocket-knife and sent him away after an interchange of terrible threats had been effected. As the rowdy's skull had a roof of wondrous thickness, he sustained no injury in his mental parts, so he changed his base only to a point from which he could watch Jack's going in and coming out.

An hour later, as Jack was going to the store, with two empty jugs to be filled, respectively, with vinegar and molasses, the rowdy sprang at him from a sheltering fence corner. Jack shouted "Foul!" but the rowdy was not particular to regard the rules of the ring just then, so he stuck one dirty finger in Jack's mouth so as to obtain a secure grip, and then with amazing celerity, invested Jack with a bloody nose and a black eye. Jack was not going to abandon the family property,

even in a fight, so he retained tight hold of the jugs, raised his hands alternately and smote his antagonist, first with one jug and then with the other. Then the rowdy made haste to cry "Foul!" but Jack, merely remarking, "What's sauce for the goose—" allowed the rowdy to complete the quotation for himself, striking him meanwhile wherever an unprotected point presented itself. A final blow in the pit of the stomach caused the rowdy to curl up on the lap of mother earth, and then Jack discovered, for the first time, that all that remained of the jugs were their respective handles, and that the rowdy was bleeding profusely in several places.

Jack had never before seen a more dangerous wound than a cut finger, and even of these he had seen but one at a time, so he greatly feared that the rowdy would bleed to death. What to do, he did not know; he recalled the little affair of Moses with the Egyptian taskmaster, and determined that flight was the dictate of prudence, but as for burying his victim in the sand, there was no sand nearer than the river bank, a mile away, and the dirt under the rowdy was a hard-beaten footpath. Away flew Jack toward home and into his father's office, where he exclaimed:

"Father, there's a rowdy dying out on the path to the store."

"Heaven be praised!" said the doctor; "that'll lessen the state prison expenses a few dollars."

"He's bleeding to death," explained Jack.

"Oh," said the doctor arising and snatching a case of instruments, "that's a different thing; it now becomes an opportunity for experimental surgery."

"It was I that killed him," continued Jack, in a very thin voice.

"Eh?" exclaimed the doctor, dropping his instruments. "Then you'd better get out as fast as you can, and not let me know where you are until you have to. Don't *ever* do it—I don't want even to see you again—I wash my hands of you forever."

"Father!" screamed Jack in utter agony, while gallows trees sprung up before his eyes in every direction, "let me tell you how it was." And Jack hastily detailed his experiences of the morning, concluding with:

"It was all because I was trying so hard to mind you, and not have anything to do with boys."

The doctor threw his arms around the youth, and exclaimed:

"You're a darling, noble, splendid boy, but there is no knowing how a jury may look at the case, when your previous reputation is considered. Get ready to hide."

Jack hurried up to his room for what seemed to him necessities, but he had time to reflect upon his varied experiences to do right, with their lamentable results, and to wonder if it were not really true, as was implied by some novels he had been unfortunate enough to read, that fate occasionally forbade some people to do right successfully. Of one thing he was very sure; come what would, he never could ask nice little Mattie Baker to become the wife of a murderer. Then he tiptoed feebly, after one or two ineffectual efforts, to his father's room, which overlooked the scene of the battle; it might be that the doctor had reached the wounded boy in time to staunch the flow of blood before it was eternally too late. From the window, Jack, with great astonishment and not entirely without disgust, beheld the rowdy sauntering away with his hands in his pockets, while beside him walked the doctor, violently shaking his fist and head at the beaten man, and filling the air with threats which a breeze wafted back to Jack.

The surprise was too much for Jack's nerves; he dropped upon his father's bed and doubted whether he ever would regain his breath again; then he bemoaned the loss of the vagabond life which had been just within his grasp, and which is the ideal of every boy at a certain period of his life. From this he was recovered by the thought that, after all, nice little Mattie Barker was not to be entirely a memory of the past. His eye and nose finally obtruded themselves upon his attention, and very unsightly objects they were in a mirror; he hoped nice little Mattie Barker would not see him until his face regained its natural appearance; and he would certainly take care never to have himself so disfigured again.

Then his father returned, hastily searched the house for Jack, caught him in his arms, and actually cried over him, upon which the boy felt himself a hero indeed. But when his father assured him that his latest exploit would have a wonderful effect in keeping boys away from him, Jack did not seem so elated as the doctor would have had him; he looked so solemn that the doctor asked what the matter was, and Jack burst out crying, and answered:

"I'm so dreadfully lonely all the time."

The doctor started to ask if either he or his wife were not always at home, but recalling the drift of a previous conversation on the same topic, he grew suddenly very cool and undemonstrative and removed himself, whereupon Jack, who read the human face as correctly as boys usually do, waxed angry, and lost sight of all his principles, as every one does in anger, and determined that if he could not have fun with the boys he would have it without them, and have all he wanted, too.

He did not lose much time in discovering a way of amusing himself. August had worked through into September, and though the public was to have no opportunity of disarranging national affairs at the ballot-box that autumn, a gubernatorial campaign had opened most vigorously in the State of which Doveton considered itself the mainstay. The rival candidates were Baggs and Puttytop, and though both were men of fair intellect and reputation, as politicians go, and the adult mind could find but little reason to distinguish between them, the boys of Doveton, who never for a moment doubted that they were in perfect sympathy with the inner sense of statesmanship, and knew the constitutional rights and special needs of Doveton

beside, were, to a man, for Baggs. Jack had gained this precious bit of information from Matt, so he promptly ranged himself, mentally, with his natural allies, and sought for means to discourage the Puttytop adherents, who stupidly saw not though they had eyes, and heard not though they had ears.

Just then an announcement was made that the famous General Twitchwire, who was stumping the state for Puttytop, would address the sovèreign voters of Doveton in the main room of the county court house, on the evening of the second Wednesday in September, the regular fall session of the county court having begun on the morning of the same day, and the town being full of countrymen who had legal grievances of their own, or of some one else, to look to.

Now the county court house was a new building which the demon of improvement had lately caused to be erected, and as the appropriations had been exhausted in the manner not unknown to political managers elsewhere, the main room was the only one which had been completed. Pipes had been laid for gas, one of them terminating in the ceiling in the centre of the room, but for evening

meetings it was, at present, necessary to light lamps or candles. So, early in the afternoon preceding the Puttytop meeting, Jack secreted himself in an upper room of the court house, with a monkey-wrench, a gunmaker's saw, and a yard of rubber tubing in his shirt bosom. He dragged a step ladder down into the main room, and standing upon this he wrenched from its place the cap upon the pipe from which the central chandelier was one day to hang. Then he returned to the room above, sawed in two the pipe which was to feed the chandelier, stretched an end of his rubber tube over the lower portion of severed pipe, and yelled through it to test the apparatus. He heard his cry repeated in the lower room so distinctly that his only fear was that somebody outside might hear it. Then he sat upon the floor, munched crackers, wished that he had a drink of water, and waited.

Evening came at last, and from the edges of the window casings, Jack saw the adherents of Puttytop coming from various directions. From the neighborhood of the hotel came the noise of the Doveton Brass Band playing "Hail to the Chief;" this indicated that the famous General Twitchwire was to be escorted in style to the court house,

and Jack lamented that he could not be outside, behind some good board fence, to throw stones at the band, but he recalled the line,

"They also serve who stand and wait,"

from the Sixth Reader, and was nobly sustained thereby. Then the sound of the music came nearer, the band playing

"The Campbells are coming,"

and then Jack saw a transparency, and yet another, and it required every word of his comforting line to support him in his privation. A tremendous hubbub in the room below came up through the gas pipe and rubber tube, and Jack applied his ear to the latter to hear what General Twitchwire might endeavor to delude his hearers into believing.

The address began on time, and General Twitchwire had just informed his audience that if through supineness and lack of concerted action the gubernatorial chair became occupied, he would not say filled, by a person with the deficient mental acumen and erroneous views which characterized the person who was the standard-bearer of the party opposed to good government, the consequence could not fail

to be most disastrous—when a distant yet loud voice was heard to exclaim,—

"You don't say!"

The speaker glared angrily about, and the chairman of the meeting, who had taken the precaution to arrange that admission should be only by tickets of a peculiar color, wondered whether counterfeit tickets had been imposed upon the doorkeeper. The general resumed the thread of his discourse, and had just pronounced a glowing eulogium upon Puttytop, when a voice exclaimed:

"Hang Puttytop! Give us a man!"

Then the sheriff and two constables, all of whom were Puttytop men, began suspiciously to scan the audience. But not a Baggs adherent could they see, except Nuderkopf Trinkelspiel, to whom it was well known that a frequenter of Gripp's rum-shop had sold a ticket for ten cents, the inducement offered being that the meeting would close with a lottery, in which every ticket holder would be entitled to a prize of some sort. But Nuderkopf, judging by his snores, was slumbering soundly; besides, the disturbing voice used a better English accent than Nuderkopf Trinkelspiel could ever be suspected of acquiring.

Several other remarks of the speaker were greeted with derisive yells through Jack's speaking tube, and the famous General Twitchwire took occasion to remark, with a great display of offended dignity, that if the authorities could not suppress such disturbers it was pretty certain that the party in Doveton was upon its last legs.

"Gott macht es!" (God grant!) shouted Jack down the pipe.

This seemed to offer a clue to the offender. The language was certainly Nuderkopf Trinkelspiel's, and he was positively the only Baggs man present, so the sheriff and the two constables dashed at him and rudely aroused him. It was the only evening meeting, except some of a religious character, which Nuderkopf had attended during his residence in Doveton; he had frequently to be aroused in church; he was very religious and musically inclined; the force of association caused him to imagine he was in church; the silence to indicate a temporary and dangerous stagnation of religious service, so he cleared his throat and successfully launched the first line of a devotional song before he opened his eyes, when a rude hand was clapped over his mouth and another was applied with great

force to the side of his head, and then he was pulled at and dragged, and finally lifted over the back of his seat, which happened to be the last bench of the jury box, and was dropped out of the window, landing on the sidewalk three feet below, in a state of confusion which bordered upon imbecility.

This was too much for such of Nuderkopf's religious associates as were there present, even although they were Puttytop men, so they arose to points of order, several of them speaking at a time, and they were rebuked by the chair, and hooted at by the rowdies, who always infested political meetings; and one excitable German cast an opprobrious epithet at a conspicuous rowdy, and the rowdy retorted by snatching a transparency from a bearer and throwing it lancewise at the German, and the cloth caught fire, and a general yell ensued, and everybody looked out for number one, with the result of making number two of everybody else, and the famous General Twitchwire stepped suddenly to a window and jumped out, and the sheriff and the two constables bawled "order" until they were themselves their only auditors, and a body of quiet but observant Baggs men in the window of a

house directly opposite, agreed with each other that the Puttytop ticket didn't seem to be looking up so very much, after all.

CHAPTER XI.

A QUIET LITTLE GAME.

WHEN Jack finally left his hiding place in the court room, it was with a pretty distinct conviction that no one would ever discover his secret, and that the evil of this life seemed as ruthless in its pursuit of Nuderkopf Trinkelspiel as in his own case. Then there slowly developed within him the thought that Nuderkopf, who had been the principal sufferer by the trick of the speaking-tube, was not even a member of the despised Puttytop faction; so Jack, like many another mischief-maker who injures some one of whom he had never thought while planning his departures from rectitude, sought refuge from his conscience by plunging into gloomy reverie upon the fateful lack of sequence in earthly affairs.

Not the least of his troubles was the fact that, whereas in other days he might have called all the boys in town together and told them the story of

his effort to purify the State government, and delighted his soul over their enjoyment of it, he could now tell it only to Matt, who, while a very true friend, had not as keen a sense of the ludicrous as Jack could have desired. Still, one hearer would be better than none, and Jack wondered whether it might not yet be early enough for him to hurry to Matt's house and impart the delicious story, when suddenly, to his great delight, he met Matt himself.

"Where have you been?" asked Matt, "I've been over by your house whistling for you for the past hour. And the loveliest thing—oh, my! Will Pinkshaw has learned a new game of cards—poker, they call it, and it's splendid. Gamblers play it for money, but it's just as much fun to bet buttons, or beans, or corn-grains, or anything. Will and I have been playing it in the moonlight, by your side fence, ever since dark, and we must have played a hundred games."

"It isn't too late for me to learn, is it?" said Jack. "The moon will shine all night."

"Oh, somebody might come along," protested Matt. "The constables prowl around after ten o'clock, you know."

"Then let's go into the stable and get on the hay under the big window," said Jack. "The moon shines in there—nice soft seat, out of sight—everything."

"But we haven't any cards," said Matt.

"Then borrow Will Pinkshaw's," said Jack. "You bring 'em up to the stable—you know the way—and I'll have a handful of corn ready, and we'll have a jolly quiet game for a little while."

Matt was nothing loth to act upon this suggestion, for new games with cards—or anything else—have a way of utterly enthralling the juvenile mind. Within ten minutes he was back with the cards, but their owner had refused to loan the precious pasteboards unless they were accompanied by himself, and Jack experienced a great though secret joy that without his own direct agency he was brought into company with a boy other than Matt, and at a place somewhat different from the Sunday School where alone he had fraternized with boys during the month. The *modus operandi* of the game was speedily made known to Jack, the corn was scrupulously divided into three equal portions, and the play began. Jack had not read Hoyle, so perhaps it was the devil, who is said to be par-

ticularly encouraging to green players, that decided nearly every game in Jack's favor. Matt was soon "busted," and meekly borrowed twenty grains of corn from the winner, but the Pinkshaw twin, who had bet no more carefully than Matt, remained financially equal to his engagements.

Jack began to wonder whether the Pinkshaw twin might not have sold his soul to the devil, like some gambler he had read of whose money was magically reproduced as fast as he lost it. The thought caused him to fix his eye upon the Pinkshaw twin as if he had been fascinated by him, and soon he discovered that the arch-adversary of souls operated from the heart of the owner of the unfailing pile, for the Pinkshaw twin, who had been preinformed of the currency to be used, was seen to slyly take some corn from his pocket and lay it upon his pile.

In an instant a sharp quarrel ensued, the Pinkshaw twin lying most industriously and displaying an empty pocket in evidence, but a careful examination of Jack's winnings showed that many grains of sweet corn were among them, whereas there was no such grain in the bin from which Jack had supplied the general exchequer. So the Pinkshaw

twin sullenly confessed, and pleaded that playing for corn-grains was no fun, anyhow, for a fellow couldn't do anything with them after he had won them; he therefore proposed that the party should play for buttons.

"Where will we get them?" asked Matt.

"Cut off the suspender buttons on our trowsers," suggested the Pinkshaw twin. "Neither of you fellows wear galluses, do you?"

The suggestion was acted upon, and the volume of currency being somewhat limited, the betting proceeded quite cautiously. But luck was still against the Pinkshaw twin, so, desperately remarking that his jacket was an old one, he removed the buttons from that garment also. And still he lost, so he attacked his shirt front, although Matt suggested that shirt buttons were hardly big enough to bet with. These same went the way of the others, and then the Pinkshaw twin, realizing that no one would see him on his way home, denuded his trowsers of all the remaining buttons, and tied a string around his waist to hold the garments up. Losing these, he pledged his pocket knife to Jack for ten buttons, with the privilege of redemption within twenty-four hours. Then, when he wanted

to "raise" handsomely on "two pair," he had nothing to do it with, Jack declining to lend anything whatever on the miserable security of a dirty handkerchief, so he offered to bet his pack of cards as fifty buttons, and Jack agreed, and calmly displayed "three of a kind" and the Pinkshaw twin was a ruined gamester.

The Pinkshaw twin had been accumulating a large stock of bad temper, however, as the game progressed, and of this he partially divested himself, as the party arose, by striking Jack a heavy blow between the eyes. Over went Jack, backward, upon some hay which inclined downward; away he rolled, until stopped by bringing up suddenly against the shelving roof; there he found himself upon one of those unreasonable hens who persist in stealing a nest late in the season, and "setting" thereupon with maternal instincts, the end of which is never calculated in advance. The hen naturally protested, in the loud manner which is said to be an attribute of her sex in general, and as Jack was slow in changing his position, she continued to protest, and then Jack heard the house door open and his father hurry down the back steps, probably in search of chicken thieves, the which abounded in Doveton.

"The other window!" whispered Jack hurriedly. All three of the boys scrambled to it, and jumped out, the Pinkshaw twin becoming somewhat involved with his trowsers, the string securing them having broken. He soon scampered off, however, holding his clothing together as he ran; Matt's retreating footsteps were already inaudible, while Jack, hurrying around to the front gate and tiptoeing up the back stair and through the open door, was in his room and in bed before he realized that his jacket, upon which he had been sitting, had been left behind. Just then the clock struck two, but Jack determined promptly that the old timepiece must be out of order, as it frequently was.

He had the cards, though, and they were irrevocably his, and to be one of the only two or three boys in town who possessed property the sale of which was prohibited by law, was glory enough to have acquired in one night, even at the expense of a blow in the face. With their possession, however, he had also acquired responsibility: his mother might be suddenly moved to "look over" his clothing before breakfast, as she frequently did when intent upon repairs; or the doctor might search his pockets, as he occasionally had done, in search

of something that would explain the extreme quiet which, once in a while, characterized Jack. So the boy got out of bed, and put the cards and the Pinkshaw twin's knife into one of his stockings, and hid them under his pillow.

Jack listened for his father's return until he was drowsy and he finally went to sleep and fell instantly into a dream of hearing a great army, with confused trampling, pass by him on some road in which he could not view them, and then that the army engaged in battle with some other army, shouting and screaming fitfully, and firing great guns spasmodically, and then there was a terrific crash, and a general roar, and the armies and the dream sank into nothingness, and Jack knew nothing more until aroused by the breakfast bell. He was very drowsy as he arose, but he remembered that it was the morning for the regular semi-weekly change of stockings, so he clothed himself and descended to breakfast to find his father very silent and his mother overflowing with the sad fact that during the night the stable had burned to the ground and the doctor had barely saved his horse, carriage and harness.

Jack was greatly affected by the information, and

recurred to his wonder whether the devil in person might not have been helping the Pinkshaw twin after all. Certainly, they, the players, had struck no light. After a slight breakfast Jack hurried out to view the remains, but the doctor was on the ground before him, and was holding up a partly burned jacket, which he was inspecting with great care.

"Jack!" exclaimed the doctor.

"Sir?" answered Jack, most courteously.

"I threw this out of the window last night, having found it on the hay, just where the fire began. There are charred matches in the pockets. How did that jacket get there?"

"I left it there yesterday," said Jack. "I was up there yesterday, lying about, and it was so warm that I took off my jacket."

"And sat on it, I suppose, and wriggled around on it and ignited the matches, and burned down my stable. Couldn't you have set fire to the house, too, while you were about it, so as to have ruined me completely?"

Jack rightly considered this a very cruel speech, but he hung his head.

Among the many bystanders, attracted by a rarity such a fire generally is in a village, was the

gunsmith, and as he gazed upon the many bits of portable property which had been thrown from the burning stable, his eye fell upon something familiar, and he picked up the saw which Jack had used on the court-house gas pipe; examining it hastily, he exclaimed:

"Why, here is my own saw, which I had such a long hunt for yesterday afternoon."

"I just borrowed it while you were out," explained Jack. "I was going to bring it back this morning and tell you about it."

"What did you want of such a tool?" demanded the doctor.

"I wanted to saw a piece of iron," said Jack, with downcast eyes.

"Who's been cutting the hose of my carriage sprinkler?" asked the doctor, suddenly espying the yard of rubber pipe, which Jack had fondly supposed would never be missed from the long coil from which he had cut it.

While Jack was casting about in his mind for some plausible excuse, he heard, to his unspeakable relief, his mother shouting from the back door:

"Doctor, doctor, come here right away! Don't wait a single minute."

The doctor obeyed the summons, and Jack was consoling himself with the thought that the monkey wrench, which belonged to the stable, could not tell tales about him, and the hen, if still alive, could not talk English, when the doctor's well-known voice struck terror to his soul by exclaiming loudly:

"Jack, come here!"

Jack went into the house, and was confronted by the father of the Pinkshaw twins, who had brought a buttonless coat and a pair of trousers as evidence of the truth of his boy's statement that Jack had fought with him, knocked him down, and cut the buttons from his clothes out of simple malice. (It may be remarked, in passing, that the Pinkshaw twin had shrewdly determined that Jack would rather be unjustly punished on such a charge than confess the truth.)

"You needn't deny it," said Mr. Pinkshaw; "my boys always tell the truth." (N. B. Everybody's boys do.) "I'll warrant you have the buttons in your pocket now, saving them up until next marble time, when you'll play them away."

"Jack," said the doctor, "empty your pockets."

Jack had not the strength to resist or devise any

way of reducing, without exposure, the protrusion of that one of his pockets which held the buttons. How he wished that the lately despised shirt buttons, so small, so insignificant, had constituted the whole body of the previous evening's currency, instead of its being inflated by the huge papier-mache sailor buttons from the Pinkshaw twin's jacket.

The doctor came rudely to his assistance, however, and soon the floor was covered with buttons, to the identity of most of which Mr. Pinkshaw could swear.

"My boy says Jack stole his knife, too," said Mr. Pinkshaw.

"I didn't!" vehemently protested Jack, and a close search failed to prove that Jack spoke untruly. Just then the Wittingham servant came to the door, holding aloft in one hand a stocking and in the other a dirty pack of cards and the knife, exclaiming:

"The loike av this was undher masther Jack's pillow, ma'am."

"That's my boy's knife!" exclaimed Mr. Pinkshaw.

"Are the cards his, too?" asked the doctor. "I hope so, for the sake of Jack's back."

"They *were* his," said Jack, determining that all hope for concealment was past. "I won them from him at poker, and won the knife and the buttons too."

"It's a lie!" shouted Mr. Pinkshaw. "My boys have their faults, but they never gamble."

"Ask Matt Bolton, if you don't believe me," said Jack.

The doctor looked as fixedly at Jack as if he were trying to discern rudimentary horns, hoofs and tail. Then he arose suddenly, seized Jack, thrust him into his room, muttered something about bread and water for a week; then the old man fell upon his knees, and besought the Lord for guidance as earnestly as many another person has done after neglecting to use any of his heaven-given sense and opportunity for the control of lively children.

As for Jack, he sat moodily down upon a chair, and formed at least one resolution, to which he had long been urged: If he ever gained his liberty again, he would never, never, never, on clean stocking day, leave his dirty stockings lying about for some one else to pick up.

And on the evening of that day the doctor pored over the skeleton of his intended book on heredity,

but the best he could do was to devise a chapter head, and even this was quoted from another book containing some excellent hints upon heredity:

"When the unclean spirit leaveth a man," etc.

CHAPTER XII.

SWEET SOLACE.

JACK was willing to live on bread and water for a week; he would have acknowledged the justice of any penalty short of death, for the burning of the stable would not appear to him other than a dreadful calamity for which he was primarily responsible. He did not mean anything wrong, to be sure, when he designated the stable as the place for the game, but it began to seem to him that what one meant or did not mean was of very little consequence when he made any departures from the beaten path of rectitude. He had not put matches in his pocket for the sake of burning the stable; he had meant nothing wrong by sitting on his jacket that night—he had only done so that he might be cooler, and that it might prevent the sharp stalks of hay from protruding so successfully through his thin trowsers. He could not foresee that the Pinkshaw twin—hang him!—would get angry, and stamp over

that coat as he struck the winner—for that was undoubtedly the time, when, under the crunching of the Pinkshaw shoe-heel, the matches were ignited. Why couldn't the old jacket have burned up, instead of remaining to tell tales? What could have brought the gunmaker, usually so industrious, to view so uninteresting an object as a burned stable, and how came he to walk just where he could espy his own saw? Why should the doctor have assumed, at sight, that the yard of hose had been cut from his own carriage sprinkler? And why had the whole affair happened on the evening preceding clean stocking day?

"Morality is the order of things." Jack may never have heard this saying, but he became slowly of an opinion which embodied the same idea, and he determined upon a reformation which should leave nothing to be desired in point of thoroughness. He would not say anything about it to his father and mother, but he would let the truth burst upon them of its own irresistible force some day. He had his doubts as to whether an announcement of his resolution would have any particular effect any way, for his parents had heard something of the sort before, without beholding any

particular fruition thereof. He would give up every single pleasure which could not be justified by the Bible itself. His issue of veracity with the Pinkshaw twin came to his mind, with the suggestion that the only boyish method of settling such affairs was hardly consistent with the nature of his good resolutions. Still, had not Ananias and Sapphira been struck dead for lying?—surely to give the Pinkshaw twin a sound drubbing would not only be excusable but necessary, as a matter of moral duty. Had not Mr. Daybright himself preached a sermon to prove that every man was, morally, his brother's keeper, and was not lying positively forbidden by one of the Ten Commandments?

As for the stable, Jack determined that the first thousand dollars he earned when he became a man should be given to his father to compensate for the loss of the building and its contents. The building cost but little more than half that sum, but the interest which would accumulate in six or seven years would bring the loss up to the amount determined upon, and Jack was determined to be honest to the last penny. And if the Pinkshaw twin was any sort of a fellow when he became a man—though from present appearances this seemed

improbable—he would see the justice of providing the money himself, for he had had no moral right to get angry at the result of fair play, particularly after having been himself detected in the act of cheating. Jack determined to reason calmly with the Pinkshaw twin on this subject—after the other settlement had been made, of course.

Then Jack began to realize that he had eaten a very light breakfast, and that the smell of boiling and roasting and baking which was wafted up from the kitchen was particularly tantalizing to a fellow who had to dine on plain bread. But even this serious thought was overborne by a graver one which came suddenly to his mind: could nice little Mattie Barker ever bring herself to love a gambler who had burned down a stable—his own father's stable, too? This was too great an agony to be endured—he could give up his darling sins, but nice little Mattie Barker was a darling of a different kind. Something ought to be done, and that very promptly, to disabuse Mattie's mind of the erroneous reports which would be sure to reach the young lady's ears, but what could it be? He might write to her the plain, unvarnished tale of the affair, but that would have to admit that he had gambled, and which

would Mattie be likely to dislike most—a possible incendiary or a confessed gambler?

Suddenly, to Jack's great relief, there entered Matt, whom Mr. Wittingham had failed to realize had been a participator in the irregularities which led to the destruction of the barn. To him Jack explained the situation regarding the stable, and a right doleful time the two boys had together until Jack remembered that he had not yet informed his bosom-friend of the affair with the political meeting. Jack endeavored to recount the incidents thereof in the light of his new resolutions, but Matt's hilarity became speedily contagious, and within a scant ten minutes Jack detected himself, to his great horror, in the act of framing a revised and enlarged order of disturbances for the next great Puttytop meeting, which would take place in about a fortnight, and was arranging that Matt, whom he had half an hour before vowed to lead into right ways, should blow torpedoes at the speaker through the open windows from a long tube which Jack would have made for the purpose.

Then nice little Mattie Barker came to mind during a lull in the conversation, love being merely secondary to action, as it is in most other restless

natures, and Jack, not without some confusion and halting of speech, informed Matt that he was in love.

"Why, are you sure?" asked Matt.

"It's a dead sure thing," declared Jack.

"Dear me!" ejaculated Matt.

"Dear Mattie Barker!" exclaimed Jack, and instantly his countenance ran through the whole chromatic scale of facial expression, and then dropped low, perhaps to rest from its sudden exertion.

"That's who, is it?" said Matt.

"Yes," said Jack. "I didn't mean to tell you, Matt, but it came out all of a sudden. I meant to ask you, though, to go and explain things to her, so she shouldn't have to think any worse of me than she needs to,"

"All right," said the literal Matt, "but I couldn't very well have told her if I hadn't known who she was, you see."

"Yes, that's true," admitted Jack.

"Well, I guess I had better do it at once, for I saw her sitting on the back piazza, peeling peaches, as I came along, and there's no time like the present, you know."

Jack acknowledged to himself the general appli-

cation of Matt's plea for promptness, but he somehow wished that the explanation might be deferred, for he was doubtful as to what message to send, so he asked:

"What will you tell her, Matt?"

"Oh, I'll say you didn't set the barn afire," said Matt, "and that your worst present fear is that she may believe you did."

"That's pretty good," said Jack, beginning to walk up and down the room, "and it's delicate, too; you can tell her I haven't sent that message to any other girl in town, and that I'd rather die than do it. Go ahead."

But Matt could not think of anything else to say, and Jack himself thought of something, but made several ineffectual attempts to give voice to it. At length he assumed a heroic attitude and said:

"Tell her that in my rigorous confinement my sole comfort is taken from thoughts of her."

"Golly!" exclaimed Matt; "that sounds just like a book! It's just stunning. I'll write that down and commit it to memory on the way, for it's too good to spoil."

Matt pencilled the sentence on the back of a bill which he had been sent to pay, and over Matt's

shoulder Jack read the words several times, with a comfort which gradually grew into pride. Then he said:

"I wish I had something to send her as a proof of my—regard. Do you suppose she ever plays marbles nowadays—I've got a gorgeous glass alley that I could send her."

"I don't know about that," said Matt, thinking profoundly, "but I guess it would be all right, for she can trade it to her brother Billy for his sleigh-line to make a skipping-rope of—I'll just suggest that to her."

"Good," said Jack. "You are a true friend, Matt. When do you suppose you could come back and report? I can't wait till to-morrow morning, but mother won't let you come in a second time to-day, I'm afraid."

"I'll come under the window and whistle," said Matt, "and you can put your head out and I'll whisper up."

"All right," said Jack, "and you'll hurry, won't you?"

Matt promised haste and departed just in time, for Jack's father came in to say that now that Matt had become a gambler, his visits would have to be

discontinued. Then Jack felt desolate indeed, and he cried, and began to make a series of promises, but he was cut short with the remark :

" I've heard a great deal from a promising boy; I think I'd enjoy a performing one, as a change."

Jack had thought some of developing to his father his great plan of restitution for the burned stable. But now he determined most resolutely to remand this great deed to the limbo of surprises, although six or seven years would be a great while to defer the enjoyment of observing the effect upon the doctor of the intended operation.

Then Jack's mother came in, bearing a tray containing several slices of bread and a glass of water, and she held the tray before her, exclaiming :

" Behold the wages of iniquity, my son."

Jack beheld, with a hungry glance, and determined that iniquity, besides being unpleasant, was paid for in currency of but slight intrinsic value. He recalled, somewhat to his confusion, the passage of Scripture which asserts that the wicked " have more than heart can wish," and he wondered if his spare repast might not be an indication that he was not so very wicked after all.

" Jack," said Mrs. Wittingham " you are kill-

ing me by inches. I've reached an age when I am easily affected by anything unusual, whether it is good or bad, and everything I hear about you upsets me."

"Nobody ever says anything about the good things I do, mother," complained Jack.

Mrs. Wittingham remembered to have had some such thought at certain times in her own life, when her good deeds were regarded as actual matters of course, whereas her petty imperfections had been causes of complaint and unkindness. But to admit such a thing would be to give the boy sympathy, and should wrong-doers have the consolation which sympathy would afford? So Mrs. Wittingham lost an opportunity of at least narrowing the gulf between her only child and herself, and continued:

"Oh, dear!—I would give anything if I could understand you. I never did any of the dreadful things you do."

"You were a girl," explained Jack.

"My brothers never did such things, either," said Mrs. Wittingham.

"I guess they didn't run and tell you every time they did anything," the boy suggested.

"They had nothing to tell," said Mrs. Wittingham.

And she told the truth; her brothers had lacked the vitality necessary to persistent mischief-making and had always been considered good boys, though their manliness after they reached adult years was strictly of a negative nature, and they had invariably failed in business and everything else they undertook, barring the one who had used slyness as a substitute for strength, and decamped for parts unknown with the funds of a corporation of which he had been cashier. But Jack could devise no retort to his mother's last remark, so he moodily took a slice of bread, and the lady departed, contemplating her son with a look far more loving than she ever indulged in when the boy's eyes were upon her.

Jack ate his dinner with considerable gusto, complaining to himself only of insufficient quality. As he lifted the last slice from the plate he discovered a bit of paper under it, upon which was pencilled the Scriptural saying, "The wicked shall not live out half their days," and Jack considered this line the most unsatisfactory dessert that had ever been placed before him. He admitted the truth of all Scripture, however, and he meekly hoped that he might live long enough to earn money to make the payment for that burned stable—this he could

surely do, if the wicked were allowed a full half of three score and ten years.

A sudden whistle under the window banished every thought, pleasant and unpleasant, except of nice little Mattie Barker, and though from where Jack sat to the window measured only three or four steps of distance, Jack felt that he consumed at least an hour in traversing it. Finally he looked down, and Matt looked up and whispered:

"It's all right."

"Glory!" whispered Jack.

"The glass alley went right to the spot," continued Matt, "for she said she'd wanted that sleigh line for months, but Billy had been too stingy for anything."

"What did she say—about me, I mean," whispered Jack.

"Oh, nothing much," said Matt, "that is—well, she said it was too bad that you couldn't get out, and that you should have to suffer for somebody else's meanness, but she hoped you'd never gamble again."

"I won't," said Jack: "I'll swear it on my Testament, right away." And Jack's head was withdrawn for a moment, and then reappeared, its owner remarking:

"There—that thing is fixed."

"And she sent you a posy—I've got it in my hat. How will I get it up to you?"

"I'll let a fish line down," whispered Jack, and hastily suited the action to the word. "Put it on the upper hook," Jack continued, "that's a new one, and no fish has ever mussed it any."

The precious token of regard was hauled up, and Jack kissed it, modestly retiring his head as he did so. Then he looked from the window again, with an extremely radiant face, and whispered:

"Oh, Matt, I never was so happy in all my life!"

"Not even when you'd got up to a woodpecker's nest?" asked Matt.

"No," said Jack, "nor when I caught that big salmon last year, either."

"Is that so?" asked Matt, reflectively. "Then I guess it's time for me to be thinking about getting in love. And I know it's dinner time. Good-bye."

Matt departed, and for the first time in his life, Jack did not regret the absence of his favorite companion. Fortunately he had not drunk the water from his goblet, so he placed the flowers therein, and he looked at them, collectively and individually, and he took them out again and kissed their

stems, because those were what nice little Mattie Barker's fingers had touched when she plucked them, and he skipped six or seven years as if they were mere syllogisms and he a politician, and his fancy invested him with a moustache and nice little Mattie Barker in a dress which touched the ground, and they were living in a beautiful house overlooking the river, with the finest of fishing rods and double-barrelled guns on racks in the parlor, and a beautiful easy chair which should be Matt's very own, and a span of crack horses, which he would sometimes lend his father, and things, and things, and things.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BOY WHO WAS NOT AFRAID.

WHEN Jack emerged from his enforced retirement of the week, it was with an aristocratic complexion, a fine sense of rectitude, and a powerful conviction that in spite of his unsavory reputation having had additional light cast upon it by the burning stable, there still was something worth living for, and that the something aforesaid was nice little Mattie Barker. The bouquet she had sent him had been carefully preserved throughout the week, though it had not always been easy to secrete it on the approach of his mother and father. Why he should have hidden it from them he could not have told, for they would have assumed that he had culled it himself, and they were more than glad on account of the new regard for flowers he had shown since his sickness; but it made Jack feel very manly to hide that bouquet, to imagine that it would be removed if discovered,

and to think of the desperate deeds he would do rather than have it torn from him.

In spite of love, however, the boy felt somewhat as a discharged criminal is supposed to feel. He did not know where to go, or what to do. The prohibition of the society of other boys had been strengthened by new and stringent clauses. Jack could not very well seek out girls to play with, unless he chose to run the risk of being laughed at, and being suspected of fickleness by nice little Mattie Barker. His recent conversations with his mother had not been of a variety of which he wanted more, his father was pleasant enough of speech—when not pre-occupied—but he would persist in affixing a moral or a warning to every sentence he spoke, and though Jack felt sure that no person living had a higher regard for moral applications than himself, he did not care to have them in everything. His father liked butter, as was proper enough, but did he mix it with everything he put in his mouth—cake, coffee, fruit, etc.? Jack rather thought not.

Perhaps the doctor had never heard of the pope's bull against the comet and its impotence, or he might have evolved a moral application for his own

use, in the matter of prohibiting Jack from associating with other boys. No matter how earnestly the world, in the time of the pope alluded to, expressed its objections to associating with comets, the comet came right along as straight as a due deference to solar control would allow. And the order of seclusion imposed upon Jack did not make him any the less yearned after by his late playmates. It began to be noticed, by boys of observing habits, that the youth of Doveton were falling into ruts, and showing no inclination to depart from them; that there was nothing particular to do; that the procession of games, each according to its season, was lapsing into irregularity; that nobody got up anything new, and the only plausible reason seemed to be the absence of Jack. In a general convention of boys it was agreed, with but two dissenting voices—those of the jugged loafer and the buttonless Pinkshaw twin—that what society needed was to have Jack resume his place in it, and the two dissenters were informed that if they didn't make the vote unanimous they would find it advisable to move to the next town.

Then it was informally resolved that Jack's father was an old hog, and a protest from lame Joey Wil-

son, who declared that during his own illness, which had made him lame, the doctor had been just lovely to him, only made it more inexcusable that the doctor should not be better to Jack. To such a pitch of indignation did the feeling against the doctor arise, that after the nine o'clock evening bell broke up the convention, the braver and more close-tongued boys expressed their disapprobation of the doctor's course by building a rail fence, some forty lengths long, around the doctor's front gate, carrying the rails from a pasture a square away. To remove this fence, and replace the rails in their rightful positions, required all of Jack's time during the following week, noting which fact the boys doubted whether their operation against the doctor had been a positive success, while Jack himself perceived, as he perspired, that even sympathy has its penalties.

But he adhered manfully to his good resolutions. As the time for the next Puttytop demonstration approached, he determined that he would leave all his delightful devices to the friend who suggested them to him, while to Matt, who one day sneaked to the fence and asked when that new torpedo blower could be had, Jack tragically exclaimed,

"Get thee behind me, Satan." To be sure, he said it before he had taken time to ponder upon the advisability of saying it, and the instant it escaped his lips he wished he had only thought it instead of uttering it; but none of this reconsideration had any effect upon Matt, for on receipt of the unexpected reply, he had bestowed just one frightened look upon Jack and then taken to his heels, and remained invisible to Jack through all subsequent days until he received an apologetic note, after which confidence was restored by supplementary proceedings at the front gate.

The great Puttytop demonstration was effected without disturbance, but there were some signs of despondency manifested by those interested in the local ticket, which Puttytop helped and was helped by, for the Germans, incensed by the treatment which Nuderkopf Trinkelspiel had received, made their grievance an affair of nationality, and went over bodily to the Baggs faction. As the few last days of the campaign approached, Jack's patriotic spirit began to chafe at inaction, and he finally became excited to the pitch of asking his father whether he might not take part in the great and final Baggs torchlight procession. The doctor was

astonished by the temerity of this request, but he was himself a Baggs man, Doveton was too far from any great city for politics to have become exclusively rowdyish, the marshals of the procession were nearly all church members, Jack had been quiet for a long time, so the doctor gave his assent, taking the precaution, however, to make a personal appeal to each marshal to keep an eye on the boy.

Jack was overjoyed, and proceeded at once to make a transparency and covered it with stirring mottoes. Then he made another, a very fine one it was, too, which he embellished with the inscription, "Truth crushed to earth shall rise again," and this he presented to Nuderkopf Trinkelspiel. But Nuderkopf intimated that he had had enough of politics to last him until the next campaign, so he used the sympathetic transparency to shield a plant of late tomatoes from the frost, and when Jack learned this he confided to Matt that he washed his hands of that ungrateful Dutchman, then and forever.

Somehow Jack had frequent and imperative needs to consult other boys before the night of the procession, but each time he asked the permission of his father, and made known the subjects of the conversation desired, until the doctor began to

believe that Jack was really trying to do right. As for the subjects of consultation with the boys, they ranged all the way from lights for transparencies to the particular style and succession of hoots to be uttered on passing Puttytop headquarters. Upon this last-named affair Jack bestowed a great deal of time, and, finally, having gone to Matt's for something, and found nearly all the boys in the Bolton barn, he conducted a rehearsal with such success that within five seconds after the first note had sounded, the Bolton horse had started back in wild affright, snapped his halter-strap, and bumped the side of the barn behind him so forcibly that he was stiff for a month afterward.

When the procession finally formed, Jack's transparency was the observed of all observers. On one side he had acknowledged his youth, but warned the opposition against despising it by the inscription, "Little, but Oh, My!" On the second face of the transparency, Mephistopheles, all in red, laid a gaunt hand, black, upon an ungainly individual in blue. Lest the meaning of this painting might seem doubtful to the general gaze, the name of Mr. Puttytop appeared under the blue personage. A third side was ornamented with the portrait of the op-

position candidate, and it must have been a good one, for Jack had cut it from a Puttytop poster which had been tacked to his father's new stable. In this picture the adapter proved himself to be not without genius, for over the whole of that portion of the candidate's cranium which had been devoted to hair, Jack had affixed real putty, fastening it in place with pins, their heads enlarged with red sealing wax and their points bent inside the canvas. The effect of this work of art, when it came under a light from the outside, was that of a bald-headed man, upon whose scalp a bad case of smallpox had concentrated its energies. On the fourth and last side there was a palpable allusion to the bibulous habits of which Puttytop had been accused by the managers of the Baggs faction, for the ornament was a sketch of a declivity, beginning at an upper corner and drooping downward almost to the opposite corner; on the top of this began a series of red spots which increased in size, number, and intensity of tint until they culminated in the general deep red at the base; under all this was the inscription, "His Nose."

Many were the stones and imprecations hurled at this *chef d'œuvre* as the procession moved through

the streets, and all of Jack's strength of mind and body was required to enable the young man to manage his temper and hold his transparency upright. It would hardly be safe to say that the doctor, who viewed the procession from a corner, entirely approved of his son's taste, but the boy's upright bearing pleased the old gentleman, and as one of the marshals, who was also Jack's Sunday-school teacher, rode very close behind Jack, the doctor went home feeling that his boy was in safe hands.

But the final disposing of the procession did not conclude Jack's patriotic duties. A large paper balloon, inscribed "Baggs Forever, One and Inseparable," was to be sent up by the boys. This was to be placed in the heavens by means of heated air, to be provided by a burning sponge saturated with alcohol, and hanging on a wire which was stretched across the open mouth of the balloon. The boy who had been charged with procuring the alcohol had dishonestly spent the money for powder and shot with which to go hunting, but he had made good the deficiency by stealing his mother's bottle of cooking brandy. It burned to a charm, the balloon soared gracefully aloft amid a loud chorus of "Ah!" and then the boy who held

the bottle and who knew the liquor by its smell, remarked that it was a pity not to put the remaining contents where they would do the most good. The motion was seconded by one or two bad boys who were not unacquainted with liquor, and the bottle was passed from mouth to mouth, Jack being the fourth who received it.

"I don't drink," said he, holding the bottle and wondering whether it would be best to empty it on the ground.

"You're afraid to," said one of the drinkers, to whom Jack had been held up, to the extreme pitch of exasperation, as a good temperance boy.

"Of course he's afraid," said another bad boy.

The mere smell of the brandy made Jack shudder, but this was as nothing to the trembling caused by the charge of fear. Afraid? well, he *was* afraid—of being laughed at, so he placed the bottle to his lips. He did not know anything about the quantity to drink, except that when he drank water out of a bottle as he frequently did when out after berries in summer, he usually took about a dozen swallows, so he swallowed industriously until one of the bad boys who had not drunk complained that none was being left

for the others. Then it seemed to him that he had been swallowing the whole of a great conflagration, and that he would cough himself to death, if, indeed, he did not die of the uncontrollable trembling that agitated his frame.

During the long-drawn moment in which this new misery was being experienced by Jack, most of the remaining boys had been vociferating discordantly about something, and when Jack regained some little control over himself he saw that the balloon was the cause of their agitation; it had lost its balance, perhaps from too much of the brandy getting to its head, and in turning sideways it had caught fire and begun to fall. It caused a beautiful though dissolving view, and soon there was nothing remaining but the sponge, which was coming down as brightly and apparently as swiftly as a meteor. Everybody ran to see where it fell, and although the sponge was making considerably the best time, it had by far the greater distance to travel, so the boys had nearly reached it when it tumbled into the well-stocked pig pen of Shantz, the butcher, where it was received with all the hubbub which the appearance of so unusual a visitor could warrant. The spectacle of a brightly-blazing sponge in a small

enclosure, with a dozen hogs squealing at it, was one which commended itself to the boys by its utter novelty, but when the proprietor of the establishment opened his own back door, and descended the yard with a club, the scene became suddenly devoid of interest, and the place which knew the boys but now, knew them no more that evening. The boys afterward agreed, while talking the matter over, that any sensible man would first have cast the dangerous visitor from the pen. But Shantz had seen so much of juvenile mischief that whenever he saw a boy near the scene of any irregularity, he thought more of preventing future trouble than of curing that which existed, so he left the pigs to take care of the sponge, and gave chase to the boys.

Jack did his best to keep up with his companions, but he had never in his life suspected our quiet old globe of such unstable ways as she indulged in during that short run. The world tipped to one side until Jack was certain that he would roll over to his left in a moment and slide straight down hill to the Atlantic Ocean, which was five hundred miles away. Then the world tipped the other way, and Jack felt himself going, going, going, until he felt sure that in a minute or two he would be caught

and impaled on some lofty peak of the Rocky Mountains, more than a thousand miles to the right. Then all the stars of heaven forsook their orbits and dashed about each other in a manner which made Jack too giddy to look at them, so he looked straight before him at the steeple of the Presbyterian Church, just in time to see it dissolve itself into two steeples, which trembled awhile and then indulged in a mad strife to see which should overtop the other. The antics which Hoccamine's store indulged in were very dangerous to a brick structure which had been erected by contract, as that had. Then Jack seemed to be treading on air, a league at a step, yet unable to approach any nearer to his companions.

Suddenly his collar tightened, though he could not imagine why; then the judgment-day seemed surely to come, for stars and steeples and stores all mixed themselves in utter confusion, and Jack fell backward some thousands of miles, apparently, and the last sensation he experienced was of seeing a giant about a mile high, but of a face, form and voice identical with those of Shantz the butcher, and the giant raised a club, which was certainly the trunk of the largest of the California big trees, and——

CHAPTER XIV.

PAYING FOR A SPREE.

WHEN next Jack became conscious of his own existence, it was with a conviction that the giant who looked like Shantz the butcher had set his feet against a mountain or something, and was bracing himself with all his force against the top of Jack's head. Then he felt assured that the giant had taken out Jack's eyes, filling the cavities with two enormous leaden balls, and that the giant had filled his mouth with wool, and put ice under his back, having first run an unyielding iron rod all the way through his spinal column, and that the giant had bound his knees and elbows in splints so that neither could be bent, and then had fiendishly set a great fire blazing in front of his face. After what seemed hours of dumb terror, Jack succeeded in parting his eyelids, and the leaden balls within them answered the natural purpose of eyes pretty well, for he saw that he was lying on the

ground, with the sun, already several hours high, shining right in his face, and that he was quite close to a fence, and out of the way of any of the beaten paths of the town.

Then he found he could move one of his arms from the shoulder, and then, after considerable effort, he could bend his elbow, and he felt the other elbow and assured himself that it was not bound after all. Then he managed to raise himself by one arm, though the iron rod in his spine was not as elastic as he could have wished, and a cautious look upward and a painful twisting of his neck showed that the giant was no longer pressing on the top of his head, though the sense of compression still remained. This soon gave way to a sensation of lightness, and Jack fell backward, though he managed to turn upon his side a moment or two after.

Some misty moments were consumed in attempts to determine who he was and how he had come to be in that particular place, the final result being that Jack became convinced that he had been drunk. The mere recalling of his last experiences of the previous night made him so lightheaded that he clutched frantically at a tuft of grass to keep himself from tumbling upward. Then he realized

that he had never before in his life been so terribly thirsty, so he entered the side gate of the garden near which he had been lying, and drank freely from the well-pail. Even this exertion left him so shaky that he had barely strength enough to get outside the garden before he dropped. Then he curled up outside the fence, shaded his eyes with one hand, and determined that the sun had never before been so bright.

Then he set himself to thinking. His father and nice little Mattie Barker came into his mind, arm in arm as it were. but the latter soon drove out the former, with the result of making the young man more miserable than he had ever been under the oppressive terrors of parental wrath. He had barely escaped losing her by being suspected of incendiarism and being a confessed gambler, but what were these to a genuine, positive case of drunkenness? No one had seen him in his present condition—at least, it was safe to assume that no one had, for to see a drunken person in Doveton was to talk about him, with the result of soon having a crowd of lookers-on. He had not meant to get drunk, but, honestly, had he ever deliberately intended to do any of the dreadful deeds of which he

had been guilty! Once, while lounging in a court-room, and in the cessation of putty-blowing which he had thought wise while the sheriff's eye seemed upon him, he heard a lawyer inform a jury that the law always considered the intention of the wrong-doer, and now Jack wished that his adored might have heard that address. He wondered if Matt could be trusted to carry her a message about something else, and then lead conversation deftly toward the unintentional wrong-doers of the world, and impress upon little Mattie the fact of which he had been informed in court. But, no, Matt was such a literal fellow.

Meanwhile, there had been an unusual commotion in the Wittingham household. Jack not having responded to the breakfast bell, the servant was sent to awaken him, but she returned with the information that he was not in his bed, nor had he been there during the night, for the coverlid and pillows were as smooth as if untouched. Then the doctor growled and Mrs. Wittingham fretted; and the doctor said he supposed the young scamp had gone home with Matt, and Mrs. Wittingham hoped the boy had not gone to the river and got drowned in the dark; and the doctor said he did not see why

women always imagined improbable things as soon as anything happened that was out of the usual order, and Mrs. Wittingham said she could not understand why men always would be unsympathetic just when there were aching hearts that longed for tenderness; and the doctor called himself a brute, upon which Mrs. Wittingham disposed of a tear or two which had come unbidden, and the doctor declared that the skin of the young reprobate should pay for those tears. But the cuticle alluded to did not appear, either with or without its natural occupant, nor could a search of the stable throw any light upon the mystery.

Then the doctor drove to Matt's, and discovered that the boy was not there, and he stopped at the jail, ostensibly to ask about the keeper's baby, but really to give the official a chance to say something, if Jack had got into trouble and his old quarters again. But still he remained uninformed, so he began to interview such boys as were visible; these knew nothing, as boys always do when questioned about one of their own number who seems to be wanted by his right guardians. No one had seen him since the balloon caught fire, though they quieted one very unscientific fear of the doctor's by

delaring positively that he had not gone heavenward with the balloon itself.

Suddenly the doctor was accosted by Shantz the butcher, who was driving by, and who said:

"Doctor, you know dot bad boy dot you got?"

The doctor admitted that he did.

"Vell, den," said Shantz; "yust you hear vat I say—better it is dot you do it. You not keep dot boy some oder blace, den I kick him some oder blace, py shimminy cracious! Dat's yust vat it is, I dell you."

"What had he done to you?" asked the doctor.

"Vat he has done?" echoed Shantz. "Vell, vat he didn't mebbe come pooty nigh a dooin', dot ding is mighty bad, now I dell you. He drew a pig sponge full of fire at my hogs. You dink I vant to sell roast hogs? No, sir! an' ven I do, I puts 'em over de fire—I not put de fire right ofer de hogs, an' den git yust lots of boys to come an' laugh vile de pigs is squeaking, cause I reckon dey don't like to be roasted midout being killed before dot."

"Why didn't you thrash him, if you caught him at such a trick?" asked the doctor.

"Vy didn't I?" asked Shantz. "Vell, I yust did,

but 'twasn't no goot; he vouldn't holler, but yust tumbled on de ground an' vas vorse as a whole dressed pig to pick up again."

A few questions as to time and place followed, and the doctor drove hurriedly off, vowing to himself that if Shantz had really injured the boy, the burly German should have a large account to settle. To tell a man to punish Jack was one thing—to find that the man had taken the doctor at his word, and in advance, too, was quite another. The doctor drove toward Shantz's house, looking carefully about him and asking questions of every one he met, so it came to pass that just as Jack was wondering how to get home and explain his absence without telling the whole truth, he heard his father's voice, startingly near at hand, shouting:

"Jack, did he hurt you much?"

"Sir?" answered the miserable boy. Then Jack recalled the likeness of the giant of the previous night, so he feebly said, questioningly, "Shantz?"

"Yes—the villain!" exclaimed the doctor. "My poor boy, come here, and let me see what he did to you. It was bad enough for you to throw a burning sponge into his pig-pen, but——"

"I didn't, father," said Jack. "The sponge fell from the balloon." And Jack told in detail the story of the ascension and untimely end of the balloon, though his recital was so fragmentary and delivered with so much shading of the eyes and rubbing of the head that the doctor grew seriously alarmed for the boy's reason. It took him but a second or two to dismount from his carriage and lay his hand on Jack's head, yet even in this short time his conscience pricked him sorely for his many sins of omission concerning his only son, and he formed enough of good resolutions to pave at least a mile of the infernal pathway.

"Let me see your eyes," said the doctor.

Jack lifted them, heavy and bloodshot.

"No concussion of the brain, thank the Lord," said the doctor. "Now show me your tongue."

Jack opened his mouth, and that very instant the doctor sniffed the air suspiciously; then with both hands he held the boy at arms' length and exclaimed:

"You've been drinking, young man."

Jack looked up guiltily for just a second, and then dropped his eyes.

"Go home this instant!" said the doctor; "take

off your clothes and go to bed, and stay there until I come. I never gave you a bit of sympathy without finding that I'd wasted it. Go along—quick!"

As the doctor spoke, he reached for his carriage-whip, so Jack moved off much faster than a moment or two before he would have thought possible under the existing physical circumstances. When the doctor had turned his carriage and moved off to visit some patients whom he had been neglecting all the morning, Jack's fears were sufficiently allayed to justify his thinking about the weather, for it seemed to him that the sun had never shone so hotly even in midsummer. Then he wondered what his father would do to him. He had been punished with great severity many a time, though his faults had never before been so grievous as this present one; the mere thought of being punished at all was more than in his present physical and mental condition he could bear.

Suddenly an old thought occurred to him: he would run away. He had many a time determined to do so, but on such occasions the weather was too cold, or too hot, or he had an uncompleted trade on hand, or he was penniless, or something. Now, however, the expected punishment overbalanced

every lesser fear. Perhaps he would starve, but he would not be so dreadfully sorry if he did; he would escape the scoldings and punishments that he knew of, while that which might come after death would at least have the alleviating quality of novelty. But there was little likelihood of his starving; runaway boys in books and story papers never did anything of the kind—they always fell upon streaks of luck, and finally married heiresses. Jack did not care to marry an heiress; nice little Mattie Barker was rich enough for him, but alas! she would have to remain a sweetly mournful memory. He would at least strive to obtain her sympathy; he would write her a touching, a tenderly-worded farewell, and then, as he came into his fortune in other lands, he would write her respectful anonymous letters—perhaps, even, he might write her in verse, though about that he could not speak with certainty at present. One thing he knew—he did wish his head would stop aching so dreadfully.

Arrived at home, he went softly to his own room, bolted the door, and sat down to write. He wrote and tore at least a dozen letters before he could pen one which seemed to suit him; this, when completed, read as follows:

"Miss Mattie Barker:

Dear Madam,

Farewell forever.

JACK WITTINGHAM."

It then seemed to him that his father deserved a parting word, so he wrote:

"Dear Father:

You want me to be good, and so do I, but circumstances over which I seem to have no control, prevent the consummation of my earnest desire and intention.* When I come back, I shall be a man, and rich enough to comfort you in your declining years, and mother too.

Your affectionate son,

JACK."

This letter had been begun at the top of the page, with the intention that it should cover the entire front, but as it was, there was a considerable blank space at the bottom. So Jack labored hard to devise a postscript, but his head was not equal to much composition. Suddenly his fond resolu-

* Jack had found this sentence in a note from one of his father's unfortunate debtors, and he had been carefully saving it for years until a proper opportunity for using it should occur.

tion came to mind; it was to have been a dead secret, but now it seemed only just that his father should have something to break the shock of his son's departure—something particularly comforting and uplifting. So he wrote:

"P. S. The first thousand dollars I earn, I'm going to send to you, to pay for the stable that burned down on account of the matches in my jacket pocket getting scrunched under Bob Pinkshaw's foot."

This postscript gave Jack a great deal of comfort as he looked at it, but he doubted whether it was the part of prudence to linger over it. So he sealed and addressed both letters, and put his father's on the mantle in the doctor's room, just under the hook where the doctor's watch was always hung at night; the other letter he determined to mail at the first post-town he reached in his wanderings.

Then he got a little hand-valise of his father's, having failed to find a pocket-handkerchief large enough to hold the traveling outfit which he considered necessary. He packed all his fishing tackle, a red shirt, a pair of swimming tights, the box containing the remains of nice little Mattie Barker's

bouquet, some underclothing, his Sunday suit, and his whole assortment of old felt hats. He looked around the room lest he might have forgotten something, and beheld the little Bible which his mother had given him on his tenth birthday. He had not read a word from it for a month, but then runaway boys always carried their mother's Bibles, or Testaments, he was not sure which—and they beat everything for turning off murderous bullets or the daggers of assassins. Then he remembered how his mother had looked at him and kissed him when she gave him that Bible, and he wished that she had always looked so, and he nearly cried without knowing why, and he longed to go find his mother and give her a great hug and kiss, but it would be just like her to ask awkward questions if he did. He would have a last look at her, anyhow, come what might, so he tiptoed to the sitting-room, and there she sat darning one of Jack's stockings, with a lot of others before her, and she was looking very tired and seemed to have been crying.

"She won't have to darn stockings any more," said Jack to himself, "and that'll be a comfort." Then he slipped out of the back door, through the

garden, behind the blackberry rows, into the meadow, and so down to a wild little gully which would lead him out of town unseen by any one.

CHAPTER XV.

RUNNING AWAY.

JACK'S first care was to get out of town; once out of sight of any house, however, he began to wonder seriously what course he should take. The terrible thirst with which he was consuming suggested that he should keep close to the river, the water of which, now that October had come, was quite cool. There was a scarcity of houses along the river bank, and Jack had entirely forgotten to bring any food with him; still, if he developed no more appetite than he had at present, he would want nothing to eat for days. Besides, the river bank was well wooded for miles, and though the trees had begun to shed their leaves, there was still foliage enough to secrete a boy from anyone who might be impertinently curious. Still better, the dry leaves would make a delightful couch, and Jack began to think that the sooner he tried them the more comfortable he would be, for

his head persisted in aching, and his legs were very weak. So within two miles of town, he halted, scraped a great many leaves against a fallen tree, as he had heard was the habit of hunters and trappers, and stretched himself upon them. The air was balmy, the shade was most grateful, so Jack soon dropped into a slumber.

When he awoke, it was quite dark, and he found himself unaccountably chilly. Fortunately he had brought matches, so he managed to make a fire of leaves and dead sticks, and the blaze was very cheering. But, somehow, he could find no side of that fire at which he could stand without having the wind blow smoke into his eyes, and his brandy-swollen optics were not in a condition to endure smoke with equanimity, even for the sake of belonging to a runaway who was going to enable them to see all the wonders of distant lands. Finally, Jack scraped the fire toward his bed, and by lying on the latter he avoided the smoke and obtained his first tuition in positive woodcraft. Piling on additional wood, he soon had a very bright fire, in front of which he again dropped asleep, but the fire crawled from leaf to leaf until it reached his bed, and he awoke to find himself half smothered, and

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his clothing charred in several places. His tours for fuel began to extend farther than the light of his fire, so that he had to feel about very carefully for wood, and the rustle in which the dead boughs indulged as he dragged them from beneath the leaves suggested snakes, of which Jack stood in deadly terror. The obduracy of several small dead trees provoked him beyond the limits of his small store of patience, the smokiness of old and rotten boughs did not tend to peace of body and mind, so Jack began to swear and then to cry. Both of these exercises made him feel better in some way, however, and he at last succeeded in making a very large fire.

But he realized, for the first time in his life, that the blood of a man recovering from intoxication, acts as if it had been passed through a refrigerator. He revolved before that fire as if he had been upon a turnspit, but cold chills would creep down his back while his front was roasting. He wished that somebody had accompanied him, so that he would not be so dreadfully lonesome, and the remarks of a distant owl, who exclaimed "Hoo—hoo—hoo—hoo—are you?" in endless iteration, did not at all satisfy his longing for human society. There was

at least one comfort to be anticipated,—the morning could not be far distant.

As Nature slowly cleared his head, Jack began to weave plans for the future. Whether to go east or west, he could not for a long time decide. The two countries were about equi-distant, and each had its advantages, but the tendency of story papers for boys preponderated strongly in favor of the latter; besides, the names of certain western localities were particularly enticing, so he decided to go west. He wished he had a revolver, but if he could beg or work his way west on the trains, as runaway boys always did in stories, he might have money enough left to buy a second-hand pistol. Besides, he could sell his personal effects—all but his fishing-tackle and his Bible and nice little Mattie Barker's bouquet; as for the Bible, he must have a breast pocket made for that at once. If the morning would only come!

Suddenly he heard a familiar bell; ha!—a fire had broken out in Doveton, and he was not there to see it. Well, he deserved some punishment for his wrong-doings, and he felt that this would be a sufficient one, for a fire was a rarity at Doveton, and he was therefore losing a great deal. The peal ran

on, but stopped at the ninth stroke. What? Could it be but nine o'clock? The night seemed to grow darker and colder all in an instant, as Jack realized that he must have fallen asleep about noon and was to be alone in the woods all night.

Then the wind awoke, and made the most dismal of noises in the trees overhead, and it blew harder and harder, and once in a while it disturbed a bird who protested shrilly and with a suddenness that sent Jack's heart into his mouth. The wind stirred the leaves, and Jack recalled, with violent agitation, the fact that a panther had been seen in those very woods a few years before. He had heard that such animals were attracted by bright lights, so the reflection of fire on dewy leaves a little way off took, to Jack's eyes, the shape of the glaring eyes of a wild animal. He hastily separated the sticks on his fire, and beat down the coals, looking behind him several times a minute as he did so, for fear the animal might spring suddenly upon him. Would a mother's Bible arrest the jaws of a panther, he wondered, and if so, to what part of his person would it be advisable to tie the Holy Book?

Then the velocity of the wind increased, and, soon a drop of water struck Jack in the face. It

must have been dew, shaken from the trees overhead? But no; another drop came, and then another, and then several at a time, and then too many to count. It was raining! Jack began to cry in good earnest, but something must be done, so he began to strip bark from the dead tree against which he had lain. It came off in very small pieces at first, but by careful handling, Jack managed to get several strips long enough to reach from the ground to the log as he lay under them. But even then things did not work as they should. Between each two pieces there was an aperture, so in a few moments the rain had marked out at least four vertical sections of Jack's clothing and made itself felt on his skin. A slight drawing up of the knees displaced one piece of bark, and the cautious twisting necessitated by the replacing of this piece, disarranged two others.

And this was the sort of thing which he would probably have to endure all night! Jack cried and shivered, and shivered and cried, until his coat sleeve was wet with tears, and his remaining garments were soaked with the rain which the continual displacement of the bark admitted. He thought of other lone wanderers—Robinson Crusoe,

Reuben Davidger, the Prodigal Son, but all of these had lucky things happen to them. Even the last-named personage had something to eat, such as it was, while Jack now felt as he imagined Esau did when he traded off his birthright for a mess of pottage. He would certainly starve before daylight, in spite of the money he had to buy food with.

Meanwhile his parents were as miserable as himself. The doctor spent the morning, between professional visits, in devising some new and effective punishment for the boy. But when he found Jack's room empty, and was unable to learn that the boy had been home at all, he forgot all about punishment, and started on horseback in search, with the fear that Jack's unsteady legs and light head had got him into trouble. He searched fence corners, wood-piles and barn-yards between his house and the place from which Jack had started, and he questioned, without success, everyone he met. Returning in real agitation through a fear that the boy might have fallen into a well in search of the water for which he must be constantly longing, the doctor retired to his own room for special prayer and supplication, when he found Jack's letter. With this he hurried to his wife, and so frightened the lady that

the doctor attempted at first to make light of the whole matter, but his fears and his apprehensions were too much for him, so he sank listlessly into a chair and covered his eyes, while Mrs. Wittingham cried, and wrung her hands, and asked what was to be done.

"I don't know," said the doctor. "I know what should have been done long ago—I always do, after trouble has come, and it's too late to remedy it. We should have made ourselves more companionable to Jack, but instead of that, we've only tried to make him a person like ourselves. We're so bound up in our own round of daily affairs that we've never paid much attention to him except when he has got himself into mischief."

"I'm sure I've always seen that he had food and clothing, and you have sent him to school, and given him everything he's asked for that was within reason."

"Within *our* reason, yes," said the doctor, "but I remember to have had tastes different from my parents, when I was a boy, and they were not at all bad, either."

"I've prayed for him, heaven knows how earnestly," said Mrs. Wittingham.

"So have I," said the doctor, "but I don't cure my patients by prayer. And my own boy, my only son, who has more good qualities than all my patients put together, I've never paid special attention to, except when his ways were irregular. And I am the man whose address—'An Ounce of Prevention is worth a Pound of Cure,'—made me such a name when I read it before the State Medical Association! Oh, consistency!"

"But what are you going to do, doctor?" asked Mrs. Wittingham. "There's no knowing where he may be, or what he will do—perhaps we'll hear of him in some penitentiary."

"Or in Congress," said the doctor. "He'll be a smart enough rascal to get there, with that busy brain and smart tongue of his."

"But you must do something, doctor," pleaded Mrs. Wittingham.

"I'll tell you what I'll do first," said the doctor, springing from his chair; "I'll go and burn up that infernal book on heredity; a man who can't understand his own flesh and blood, isn't fit to write about those of the rest of the race. Then I'll hire both constables to track him, first swearing them to secrecy. I guess I won't burn the book, though

—I'll learn enough by this experience to tell the truth instead of running a lot of theories on the public."

The constables were on the road in an hour, and the doctor, pleading a sudden call out of town, turned over his patients to the least disagreeable of his rivals, and took the road himself. But no one seemed to have seen Jack. Matt knew nothing about him, and the doctor reached home at midnight looking as many years older as he certainly was, wiser and sadder.

All night long Jack's parents lay awake in each other's arms, crying, praying, reproaching themselves and excusing each other, and forming self-denying resolutions for the future in which they hoped to have their boy again. With each gust of wind, Mrs. Wittingham shuddered and suggested dreadful possibilities, and the doctor comforted his wife while he kept to himself suggestions equally dreadful. The rain sat the doctor to fearing dangerous sickness to the boy who was in such unfit condition to breast a storm. When *he* was a scrapegrace boy himself, and away from home, he had always sense enough to go into a barn when it rained, but he never thought to attribute this

much of wisdom to Jack, for his thoughts kept recurring to the boy's earlier days, when Jack was a sturdy, merry, helpless baby, and his parents had planned such a delightful future for the jolly little rogue.

A swing of the gate leading to the barn-yard brought the doctor to his feet, and hurried him out into the storm with bare head and feet, but alas, it was only the wind. A muffled step on the back piazza called him again from his bed, but he found only the family cat. He grew too weak to try to silence his wife's fears, too weak too think, too weak to examine his own apprehensions, too weak to do anything but pray and promise. At early dawn he dressed himself and hurried out to feed his horse, so that the animal might be ready for an early start. He gave the pony an extra measure of corn, and climbed into the hay-loft to push down some hay. An old hat of Jack's lay upon the hay a little way off, and the doctor snatched it and kissed it passionately, his eyes filling with tears as he did so. Then, as he wiped his eyes, he saw something else that reminded him of his boy, though he scarcely knew why. He stopped to pick it up, and a loud yell resulted, for the dingy

object was Jack's hair, the owner of which had burrowed the remainder of himself deep in the warm hay. Tears, fears, prayers, good resolutions and all other products of night and penitence escaped the doctor as if they were dreams, and he exclaimed:

"Well, sir?"

"Oh, father!" said Jack.

"Is this as far as you've been?" demanded the parent, indignant about what seemed to him sympathy obtained under false pretences.

"Oh, no," said Jack, "I've had an awful time. You may punish me all you want to, but you can never make me suffer as I've done to-night." And Jack cried as if his heart would break.

"Your poor mother," said the doctor, "has been nearly crazy."

"Let me see her!" said Jack. "Just let me see her once more." And in a moment Jack had jumped from the hay-loft window and was limping toward the house.

The doctor, recalling with some shame his good resolutions, followed with all possible haste, though by the conventional means of exit, and when he entered the house, he beheld the runaway hugging and kissing his mother in most frantic fashion.

CHAPTER XVI.

LOSING A REPUTATION.

JACK was so overjoyed at getting home again that his plain little room seemed a palatial residence when he entered it. As long sections of bare skin were visible through his dried but burned clothing, and as the latter was also well sprinkled with hay-seed, he made haste to change his apparel. He really hoped his father would whip him, he had been so bad, and lest the punishment should not be as heavy as he deserved he put on very thin clothing, and neglected to put anything between jacket and skin to temper the blows. If his father did not punish him, he would punish himself; he would go without pie and cake for a year, or he would commit to memory a chapter of the Bible every day. Of course nobody in the village would speak to him now, but he didn't care, if only he could remain at home, never to go away, not even when he became a man.

Suddenly, as he emptied the remaining pockets of his burned clothes, he found the letter which he had intended to mail to his sweetheart from some convenient post-office. At sight of this his heart gave a mighty bound, and he retracted his resolution to remain at home all his life, unless, indeed, his mother might be brought to fully approve the choice of his heart. He would lose no time in consulting both his parents about this affair of the affections, and he counted it as a sin that he had not done so long before. What very different people from what he had supposed them to be, that night had taught him his father and mother were!

The expected punishment not manifesting itself, Jack ventured out of his room and stood upon the back piazza to look at the garden, which suddenly appeared to him to be the finest garden that the world ever knew—the garden of Eden excepted, perhaps.

From here he listened to the breakfast bell, and wondered if any bread and water would be sent to him; if not, he would at least have the consolation of knowing that he didn't deserve any. But suddenly his father shouted that his breakfast would

be cold if he didn't eat it soon, so Jack descended, in a maze, to the nicest breakfast he had ever seen, and oh! wonder of wonders, his father gave him a cup of coffee, a luxury which he had been taught to forego, because the doctor thought it very injurious to growing boys with large heads. Jack occasionally stole a loving look at both parents, but it pained him greatly to discover for the first time, that his father looked as if he was going to be an old man, and he was confused by seeing his mother's eyes fill with tears at short intervals.

When breakfast was over, the doctor went into his office without saying a word to Jack, and Mrs. Wittingham, first kissing her boy, went to her household affairs, and Jack felt very uncomfortable. He was too full to be silent, but it was not the sort of fullness, so often experienced, that could be relieved by whistling, or singing, or dancing, or teasing the family cat. He was absolutely longing to pay the penalty of his misdeeds, and he was determined not to be the cause of any delay, so he followed his father into the office—a thing he had never done before in his life in the face of impending conflict. The doctor was surprised beyond

measure by this unexpected demonstration, and his astonishment increased as Jack, after lounging about uncomfortably for a few moments, suddenly exclaimed:

"Father, I want to be punished."

"Bless me!" exclaimed the doctor, turning so suddenly that a powder which he was preparing dusted all over his clothing. "Have you lost your senses, my boy?"

"No, sir," said Jack, hanging his head. "I guess I've just found them. I've been a dreadfully bad boy, and I think I deserve to be punished severely."

"Well," said the doctor, after several moments of silent contemplation of his boy, "that's the strangest case I ever heard of."

The doctor dropped the paper which had held the powder, hurried to the desk, took out the notes for his work on heredity, and made the following memorandum: "It is undeniable that the mental, like the physical nature, sometimes generates a quality utterly different from itself." Then the doctor erased this, and re-wrote and amplified it. The second form did not satisfy him entirely, so again he erased and wrote, and repeated the process several times. As he was making his sixth erasure

he became conscious that Jack had lounged up to his elbow.

"Oh!" said the doctor, "you said you wanted to be punished, didn't you?"

"Yes, sir."

The doctor wanted to say "Confound it!" but he habitually refrained from such remarks before his boy; as he looked back to his doubly scrawled page, however, he unconsciously penned "Confound it!" directly after his late erasure, and he followed it with exclamation points to the end of the line.

"What do you think should be done to you?" asked the doctor, finally.

"I don't know," said Jack, "but it ought to be something dreadful, for I've been so bad."

"Why did you get drunk?"

"I didn't mean to do it," said Jack, "but that's just the way with everything I do," and Jack explained the affair with the brandy-bottle.

"You did something worse than get drunk when you took that brandy, my boy," said the doctor.

"I suppose so," said Jack; "I always do something worse. But I don't know what it was."

"You showed yourself to be a coward," replied the doctor. "What do you think of cowards?"

"They'd have called me a coward if I hadn't drunk it," said Jack.

"Yes," said the doctor, "and that's what you were cowardly about, can't you see?"

Jack admitted that he could.

"Wouldn't it have taken more bravery to have laughed and fought down such a charge, than it required to drink the liquor?" asked the doctor.

"Yes, sir. And I want to be punished for being a coward too."

"Goodness!" exclaimed the doctor, seizing his hat and vanishing. A few minutes later the Reverend Mr. Daybright, just as he had entered his study, received a call from Dr. Wittingham, and the doctor promptly proceeded to detail Jack's case and ask for advice. Now Mr. Daybright belonged to a denomination which has very pronounced ideas on the subject of sin and punishment, and the minister preached as his church believed, and was sure that he believed what he preached, yet he counselled the doctor to let the boy alone.

"But he wants to be punished," urged the doctor.

"What good can it do him?" asked the minister; "if he is in that frame of mind, the sole object of punishment is attained in advance."

"But he has done wrong; he has kept his mother and me in intolerable misery for twenty-four hours, and it seems to me that something should be done to him."

"Ah!" said the minister, "you're thinking about revenge, which is very different from punishment. And it is my duty, as your pastor, to urge you to give up the thought at once, for it is unchristian and brutal."

"Why," said the doctor, flushing angrily, "I don't want to punish him; I simply think it a matter of duty."

"Yes," sighed the minister, "revenge has generally been considered a duty, so great is the influence of inheritance even upon minds intentionally honest."

The doctor abruptly departed, muttering to himself:

"That's a point for the book, any how!"

Arrived at his office, the doctor found Jack still there. He picked the boy up in his arms, and as Jack mentally submitted to whatever was to be his fate, his father sat down, hugged the boy close, and said:

"My darling fellow, tell me what I can do to keep

you out of further mischief and trouble. That shall be your punishment."

The exquisite sarcasm of the potter questioning his clay did not strike Jack, which is not very strange, as the doctor himself was unconscious of it. But Jack could only say:

"I don't know."

"I would sell everything I own, if money would do it," said the doctor.

Jack was still unable to answer, but the doctor's assertion caused the boy to squeeze closer to his father's breast, which movement greatly comforted the old gentleman.

"I think if you'd always let me be with you, father, I would be a real good boy," said Jack. "I like you better than I do anybody—but Matt; yes, better than Matt either."

"Thank you, my boy," said the doctor, with some little coolness which Jack detected.

"I've got to do something," said Jack, "and if I can't see things that's good to do, I have to do others."

The doctor remembered having had some such experience himself, in the days of his own mischief-making, but he answered gravely:

"I have to spend a great deal of time in sick-rooms, my boy, where it would be inconvenient for you to be."

"Then let me be with you when you're at home," said Jack, "and," he continued, rather hesitatingly, "let me ask questions, and you try to answer so I can understand you."

The doctor dimly realized that when he was busy he did not answer questions willingly or lucidly, but he replied:

"You ask a great many questions about things which I don't think you should know about, Jack."

"Well," said Jack, "I can't help thinking about them, and when you turn me off, I nearly always ask somebody else and I find out anyhow."

The idea that other people should be telling his boy about matters which he declined informing him upon was a blow to the doctor's self-respect, and his sense of propriety, too, for he knew what class of people Jack would be likely to apply to for information, and the nature of the answers which would be given. The doctor pondered a little while, and then said:

"Jack, how would you like to learn a trade? You could be with me in the evenings, you know."

"What sort of a trade?" said Jack.

"Whatever you like," said the doctor. "I wouldn't for anything have you at any that was distasteful to you. You certainly like to use tools—you have ruined all of mine in various ways."

"I think I'd like to be a carpenter," said Jack.

"Then you shall," said the doctor. "If you like it, and stick to it, I'll set you up as a builder when you learn it, but the moment you grow sick of it I want you to let me know. You are smart enough to become a good architect, and that's a more profitable profession than mine."

"May I have tools of my own?" asked Jack.

"Yes," replied his father, "the best that money can buy. And I will go right away and find some one who will teach you."

The doctor went straightway to the best builder in the neighborhood, and had the proposition civilly but promptly declined.

"Every boy I ever took managed to ruin all my best tools within a year," explained the builder, "to say nothing of the lumber which he worked up into fancies of his own, and ruined by failures of one sort and another."

"I'll buy my boy the best and largest set of tools that you can select," said the doctor.

For a moment this offer seemed an inducement to the builder, for there were many tools which he disliked to buy yet needed occasionally to use; he might borrow from the promised outfit. But as he thought further, he replied:

"You're very fair, but tools aren't everything. If I do the square thing by the boy, I must use a great deal of time in teaching him, and time is money. My time is worth a great deal more than the boy's work will be for a couple of years."

"I'll pay you cash for your time," said the doctor; "I'll give you a thousand dollars in advance, if you say so."

This offer staggered the builder, prosperous though he was, for where is the man who does not want a thousand dollars?

But still the builder hesitated, and the doctor asked:

"What else do you want?"

"Well," said the builder, prudently retiring to the doorway of a house he was building, "what I want is to tell you something that maybe you won't like, but I can't help taking it into consideration. They do say—*I* don't say it, mind, but I've heard it from a good many—that Jack is the worst boy in town."

"It's a lie!" roared the doctor. "He's the best —that is, he has the best stuff in him. He's never quiet; he learns his lessons as quickly as a flash; he hates work about the house, just as I'll warrant you did when you were a boy, and he must do something. He likes to handle tools, though, and wants to be a carpenter."

"Liking is all very well," said the builder, "but sticking to work don't naturally follow."

"Did you ever hear of his dropping a job of mischief until he had thoroughly finished it?" asked the doctor.

"No," answered the builder with great promptness.

The final result was that sundry papers and moneys passed between the doctor and the builder, and on the following Monday morning, Jack was at work at seven o'clock nailing planking upon a barn. The news got about town very rapidly, and by noon there were at least twenty boys looking at the unexpected spectacle, and tormenting Jack with ironical questions. When night came Jack's hand felt as if it could never grasp a hammer again, and he was otherwise so weary that he declined, without thanks, an invitation to go with the other boys to

serenade a newly-married couple with horns and bells. Then he helped shingle a portion of the roof of the new barn, but his mind was greatly distracted by the awkwardness of a boy, in an adjoining pasture, who was trying to braid together the tips of the tails of two calves; the consequence was that he had progressed so short a distance with his own row of shingles that the other workmen had gone across the barn and returned to start afresh, and, as they rested until Jack got out of the way, they ungratefully upbraided him because of his slowness, and he wasn't going to be called slow again, not for all the calves' tails in the universe.

This book might have been continued indefinitely, had it not been that Jack was steadily at work which he liked, and had a great deal of his father's society out of working hours. Gaining these, he lost his reputation for being the worst boy in town, for although he remained for several years a boy and a very lively one, he had something besides mischief to exercise his busy brain upon, and a boy cannot be honestly busy and mischievous also, any more than he can eat his cake and have it too. Even the doctor and Mrs. Wit-

tingham reformed, though it was very hard for the latter to stop fretting at the boy, and for the former to cease acting as if his son, like his horse, merely needed food, rest and correction.

Jack did not go about preaching reform to the boys and advising them all to be carpenters, but he unconsciously talked from a standpoint very different from that which he had habitually occupied in other days, and his talk came gradually to exert considerable influence among the boys, though they seldom noticed the change themselves. Jack's very title, "The Worst Boy in Town," was in considerable danger of lapsing for lack of a successor, and the inhabitants of Doveton are still undecided as to where it belongs.

As for the doctor's great work on heredity, it is not in print yet, for the doctor happened one day, while mourning over a neglected and consequently unproductive Bartlett pear tree, to drift into some analogies between the animal and vegetable kingdoms, with the result that he realized that if the splendid hereditary tendencies of the tree could not prevent its bareness and its running to superfluous wood, there could be no hope of an untrained boy, even if he was a scion of the Wittingham stock.

This idea took such entire possession of the doctor that he went into the house and burned his manuscript as far as completed, and all the notes beside.

According to Jack, who professes to be an infallible authority on the subject, nice little Mattie Barker grows nicer every day, and she has promised to change her name in the course of time, and her parents have endorsed her decision, for though Jack is not yet of age, steady boys who are also bright, and have learned a business which is not akin either to gambling or theft, are not numerous enough to be despised. And Jack has a whole portfolio full of cottage plans, all of his own designing, over which he and Mattie spend long and industrious evenings, and Jack has taken a solemn vow that when the proper plan is decided upon, and the building begins, Nuderkopf Trinkelspiel shall be the sole hod-carrier, and shall be paid the highest market rates for his services.

Being practically a successful man, Jack is the receptacle for the confidences of hosts of his old playmates, who feel that their good qualities are not appreciated by a world which is quick to complain of their occasional irregularities, but he has

sent many of these youths sadly away by remarking:

"It doesn't matter how many good qualities are inside of a fellow, if only his bad ones make themselves lively on the surface."

FINIS.

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